

# **UNHCR's Biometric Registration in Ugandan Refugee Settlements**

A Critical Assessment of Biometric Registration for Refugees  
Seeking Protection in Uganda

**Nicolò Braggio, 20180990**

Department of Development and International Studies

MSc Global Refugee Studies, Aalborg University

10th Semester

28th May 2020

**Supervisor:**

Martin Lemberg-Pedersen

**Number of Characters:**

157.704

## Abstract

Whilst the Western World is increasingly subject to the stereotype of African refugees fleeing from conflict to seek protection in Europe, there is a country in Sub-Saharan Africa, which emerged over the years as a valid alternative to the so called European dream: Uganda. Uganda historically took responsibility for millions of displaced people from East and Central Africa, keeping its borders open for refugees and asylum seekers, with one of the most generous and progressive approaches in the world (World Bank, 2018). It is namely this approach that led Uganda to reach the incredibly high (and little known) number of almost one million and a half refugees over the years (UNHCR, 2020). This places the country as the first refugee host in Africa and the third in the world after Turkey and Pakistan (UNHCR, 2020). In order to support the coordination and effectiveness of humanitarian operations across the country, in 2018 UNHCR, together with the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), which is the governmental authority in charge of the refugee response, conducted an universal refugee verification exercise which resulted in all refugees seeking protection in Uganda being biometrically enrolled. From then onward, all new arrivals must be biometrically registered in order to be considered as refugees on the Ugandan territory.

Biometric registration is progressively being portrayed as the future key to refugee management, especially because of programmatic reasons, which will be analysed and compared to the operational costs through this thesis.

Among the several ethically sensitive aspects that will be investigated, biopower theory will serve as a theoretical lens to analyze the “control” that UNHCR and OPM exert over refugees and that contribute to shape them as a “subject of control” with little room for decision making and at the same time several duties to fulfil. Furthermore, the analysis will argue that the remote management approach to which refugees in Uganda are subject to, coupled with their collection and use of data from external stakeholders, is potentially dangerous for refugees – argument which will be further developed through the course of the analysis. Lastly, new types of threats that could put at risk the privacy and personal security of refugees will be investigated, with a particular focus on cyber-security, data sharing agreements and other standard implementing frameworks regulating biometric deployment as per the UNHCR policy document. This will be done by comparing what stated in UNHCR milestone documents on biometric registration operations with field notes and data retrieved from participatory observations and qualitative data collection from interviews with humanitarian personnel.

# Table of Contents

List of abbreviations: .....	4
List of figures: .....	4
1.0 Introduction .....	5
2.0 Theoretical framework .....	6
2.1 Governing through biopower.....	8
2.2 Remote policy-experimentation of control.....	9
2.3 Protection concerns of biometric deployment in Ugandan refugee settlements .....	11
3.0 Methodology.....	12
3.1 Literature review.....	12
3.2 Policy analysis .....	13
3.3 Qualitative data collection and field notes .....	14
3.4 Desk review .....	16
3.5 My own positionality.....	16
3.6 Limitations.....	16
4.0 Analysis .....	17
4.1 Ugandan context information .....	18
4.1.1 Registration process in the Uganda refugee system .....	19
4.2 Preliminary problem context .....	20
4.2.1 Ethical control-related concerns of refugee management .....	20
4.2.2 Outcomes of remote data analysis .....	21
4.2.3 Biometric threats.....	22
4.3 Policy analysis through qualitative data collection .....	23
4.3.1 Data sharing policies .....	24
4.3.2 UNHCR data protection policies.....	26
4.3.3 Rights of data subjects.....	29
4.3.4 Registration location for refugees seeking protection in Uganda.....	30
4.3.5 Information required during registration process .....	32
4.3.6 Refugee records management and updates.....	35
4.3.7 UNHCR's home visits .....	36
4.4 Desk review .....	37
5.0 Conclusion .....	39
6.0 Reference list .....	43
7.0 Annex 1: .....	47
8.0 Annex 2.....	52

## **List of abbreviations:**

BIMS – Biometric Identity Managements System  
CRRF – Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework  
DRC – Danish Refugee Council  
ECOSOC – United Nations Economic and Social Council  
EU – European Union  
GoU – Government of Uganda  
HQ – Head Quarter  
ICT – Information and Communication Technology  
IHL – International Humanitarian Law  
LRA – Lord’s Resistance Army  
NFI – Non-Food Item  
NGO – Non-Governmental Organization  
OPM – Office of the Prime Minister  
PoC – Person of Concern  
PSN – Person with Specific Needs  
RSD – Refugee Status Determination  
SGBV – Sexual and Gender-Based Violence  
UN – United Nations  
UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
UK – United Kingdom  
USA – United States of America  
WFP – World Food Program  
WHO – World Health Organization

## **List of figures:**

Figure 1: Map of Ugandan refugee settlements

## 1.0 Introduction

East Africa, among other Sub-Saharan regions, has been historically characterized by different degrees of political instability. In recent years the regional stability has been compromised by factors such as weak state presence, famine, civil wars, pandemics and genocides. This reached the peak with the ethnic violence and Ebola outbreaks in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo), and the civil wars in Sudan and Somalia. These are only a few of the aspects that led millions of East Africans to seek asylum abroad. While the Western and European newspapers are constantly focusing on the refugee influxes towards Europe, it is often unnoted how Uganda paved its way as a progressive country and “open” destination for millions of refugees from the region. Throughout the years Uganda has kept its borders open for forcibly displaced populations, offering a safer alternative to the route that refugees would need to undertake to reach Europe. Uganda is one of the pioneering countries implementing the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), which guarantees open borders, emergency response, resilience, self-reliance and a wide range of rights for 1,423,740 refugees seeking protection in Uganda (OPM, n/d). In such a complex refugee response operation, where tens of thousands of refugees cross into the Ugandan border every month (UNHCR, 2020), UNHCR and OPM found themselves dealing with one of the biggest - yet underfunded - crisis worldwide (Burt, 2018). On top of this, a general mistrust of refugees’ data coming from the Government of Uganda (GoU), risk of fraud and potential threats from such influxes (Parker, 2018), reliable data on the refugee population emerged as more necessary than ever. In order to fill this gap, UNHCR and OPM completed the deployment of biometric registration technology for all refugees seeking protection in Uganda in 2018 following a universal verification exercise (UNHCR, 2018). The decision to undertake a universal biometric registration exercise in Ugandan refugee settlements was mainly driven by the need to revise the budgetary allocations of UNHCR, by the widespread level of fraud and by the need to dispose of reliable data about refugees to increase their protection.

Starting from this assumption, this thesis will seek to balance the pros and cons of biometric registration for refugees seeking protection in Uganda. The programmatic advantages for UNHCR and OPM related to the biometric deployment in Ugandan settlements will be investigated together with the risks that this approach exposes refugees to. These risks remain unaddressed within the same UNHCR policies on data protection, which often find no tangible application at field level.

The research question this thesis will seek to answer is:

- How does the deployment of biometric registration affect asylum seekers and UN operations in Uganda, and what are the risks that biometrically registered refugees are facing in Uganda because of UNHCR registration practices?

This question will be able to cover several aspects of biometric registration for both refugees and humanitarian agencies. The rationale behind it is to understand what biometric registration really implies for refugees, as well as which means does this technology give to UNHCR and OPM when assisting them.

To investigate the abovementioned aspects, this thesis builds upon three theoretical lenses. Foucault’s biopower theory will support the analysis providing an alternative interpretation to the necessity of biometric deployment. Ethical aspects will be investigated through biopower theory in order to determine whether it is realistic to define refugees subject “controlled” by UNHCR and OPM. Duffield’s cyber humanitarianism theory, on the other hand, will investigate how refugees’ data can become subject of data analysis by stakeholders other than humanitarian agencies and foreign governments, and its implications on

beneficiaries and users. The last theoretical framework is Sandvik's humanitarian cyberspace, which intends to shed light on the new types of threats that refugees are exposed to while undergoing biometric registration.

These three approaches will be merged with both a literature and policy review and direct data collection. The literature review will seek to apply the concepts retrieved from the theoretical lenses to the Ugandan context, as a basis for the analysis. The policy review of two UNHCR milestone documents protecting refugees' data and regulating the biometric deployment on UNHCR-driven settlements will crosscheck these with qualitative data and field notes collected in two Ugandan refugee settlements. Lastly, a desk review will merge the findings generated by the analysis with the existing literature on biometric deployment in Ugandan settlements. The theoretical frameworks will be presented in the second chapter and explained in separate subsections. Chapter 3 will focus on the selected methodological approaches, which will be explained in light of the contextual information from the research conducted on the field. Furthermore, a subchapter aimed to explain the peculiar professional-academic positionality that generated this thesis will follow together with a subchapter dedicated to some limitations that affected the final work. The analysis will be conducted in chapter 4, introduced by a subchapter with Ugandan and regional contextual information. Secondly, through a literature review, the concepts of the three theoretical frameworks will be applied to the Ugandan context in order to introduce a preliminary problem context related to several sensitive aspects characterizing biometric technology. Based on the resulting problematic aspects, a policy analysis, combined with qualitative data and field notes, will analyze and cross-check the field implementation of biometric technology with the standards set out by the policy document under analysis. This will help understand whether the refugees undergoing registration enjoy the same level of protection they are entitled to as per the policy documents. The chapter will conclude with a desk review merging these findings with the existing literature on biometric deployment in Ugandan refugee settlements. This will lastly contribute to conceptualize the new type of threats refugee are exposed to and to confirm the findings, followed by a short conclusion.

## **2.0 Theoretical framework**

Forced migration and technological development are amongst the two most crucial topics characterising our era. This is particularly true in regard to the humanitarian sector, a field that has been historically seen as characterized by a strong involvement of human interactions rather than technological ones. As in many other fields, the humanitarian sector experienced a shift that opened doors for more and more technological deployment. The interactions between this and forced migration will constitute central aspects of this thesis. The technological – humanitarian nexus analysed by this thesis is composed by different aspects and namely it will investigate the outcomes that biometric registration deployment is having *on* displaced populations and *for* different stakeholders. Moreover, the analysis will question how this technology is helping the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) refugee desk in planning and implementing the Ugandan refugee response; how refugee data can produce a profit (not necessarily economically speaking) for the Western world; and also to what risks refugees are exposed when undergoing this registration system.

These aspects will be analysed through three different theoretical frameworks as well as different methods that will be described below.

Refugees and asylum seekers are a shared responsibility of different state actors but directly involving even more non-states actors, due to the concerns they raise in terms of security, sovereignty, cooperation between host states and international organisations (Betts, 2009, p. 2). Due to the issues it touches upon, forced migration's cause and consequences are heavily studied and analysed by several disciplines related to social sciences, geography and law (Betts, 2009, p. 2). Academics are not the only ones interested in analysing forced migrants: especially host states and international organisations have a greater interest in studying refugee populations, as they are at the forefront of refugee response.

Technological development plays a central role in how state and non-state actors manage displaced populations, giving these actors the means to rely on an incredible range of data to develop and implement their response strategies. The data collection technology most relevant for the paper at hand is, at the time of writing, among the most controversial and a new refugee management tool: the biometric registration technology. The word biometric refers to a "Biological and behavioural characteristic of an individual from which distinguishing, repeatable biometric features can be extracted for the purpose of biometric recognition" and "covers a variety of technologies in which unique identifiable attributes of people are used for identification and authentication." (Biometric Institute, n/d, 1). The most common biological characteristics captured in humanitarian operations are fingerprints, iris scans and facial images. Yet, being a technology in constant development, further biological features as DNA, vein and voice recognition are under different stages of testing (Biometric Institute, n/d, 2). The fields in which biometric technology is being used are numerous. The deployments vary from private sector application and, more relevant for the paper, governmental exercises on schools and libraries as well as on border control and immigration services in the prevention and response to security threats (Biometric Institute, n/d, 3). Biometric registration through iris recognition has been field tested at first not during the registration of asylum seekers, but rather during the UNHCR's repatriation exercise of Afghan refugees returning to their home country after the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001 (Kessler, 2003). The circumstances in which biometric registration has been originally deployed, were not ideal due to the weather conditions – namely heat and dust characterizing the Pakistan – Afghanistan border area, whereby the efficiency of the technology was reported to be decreasing (Jacobsen, 2015). Furthermore, cataracts are considered another critical aspect, which are able to decrease the efficiency of iris recognition; the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that approximately one thousand out one million of Afghan citizens are becoming blind because of cataracts (Jacobsen, 2015). These are some of the reasons why the deployment of the first field use of iris technology can be seen as a highly controversial topic, which is potentially able to introduce new insecurities in the region (Jacobsen, 2010). The development and adaptation of biometric technologies to the humanitarian field has been frenetic since the first test at the Pakistan – Afghanistan border in 2002. Several milestones had to be reached to make biometric technology become a reality nowadays, and among them there are the Biometric Identity Management System (BIMS) pilot testing in Malawi of 2013 and the final test that took place in Thailand in 2015 (UNHCR, n/d, 1). Today there are 7.7 million refugees from 130 countries where refugees have undergone UNHCR's biometric registration procedure data (UNHCR, n/d, 2). Uganda implemented the largest verification operation in deploying biometric registration in 2018 and, on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2019, Uganda hosted 1,394,678 biometrically registered refugees from South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Somalia, Rwanda, Eritrea, Sudan and Ethiopia.

Some of the reasons behind the decision that brought the Refugee Desk of the Office of the Prime Minister and the UN Refugee Agency to launch the joint verification operation for refugees settling in Uganda vary from better resource allocation, national and district action planning (UNHCR, n/d, 1), general mistrust of numbers provided by governmental sources

(Okiror, 2019), to fighting against fraud and for auditing purposes (Jacobsen, 2015). In the thesis at hand, several others are the analyzed aspects related to the biometric enrolment of refugees and the analysis will be built upon three interlinked theories that, once combined, will provide an understanding of the biometric technology implementation-related outcome for different stakeholders such as refugees, international organizations and the Western world.

Whether biometric registration represents a revolutionary asset for refugee management or a monitoring and controlling tool that exposes refugees to further harm is still a topic academics are debating. UNHCR considers biometric registration and BIMS as a tool which is not only able to safeguard refugees' identities, but to furthermore better protect beneficiaries and to reduce the level of fraud (UNHCR, n/d, 1). Several researchers and academics have critically analyzed implications, functions and goals of what UNHCR presents as the future of refugee management. These point out the security threats as the risks concerning privacy and the ethical nature of the data that refugee must provide in order to receive humanitarian assistance (Lodinova, 2016). The thesis at hand intends to analyze different outcomes and effects of biometric technology on refugees with three theoretical lenses. Firstly, the Foucauldian concepts of Biopower and Governmentality will support an analysis that argues that there is an unfair power relation between refugees and humanitarian workers and that biometric technology can possibly be used as a control tool in the hands of several stakeholders. Secondly, Duffield's concept of cyber humanitarianism will serve as a lens to investigate the tendency of increasing reliance on technologies which allow humanitarian workers to manage displaced population remotely, strengthening a North-South power relation and a "policy experimentation" of control. Finally, the Humanitarian Cyberspace theory extracted by Sandvik's literature will address new risks emerging from the deployment of biometric technologies of registration and from the remotely based refugee management.

## **2.1 Governing through biopower**

Even though Foucault does not speak of refugees nor displaced populations, his theories are found by the thesis at hand extremely related to the way refugees and asylum seekers are in several ways controlled and managed by several state and non-state actors as OPM and UNHCR.

The "problem of government" has been the central topic of Foucault's lectures between 1977 and 1978. The problem he raised, highly linked to the thesis at hand, is how to control an entire population and its subgroups, through the use of biopower as a "population management tool" (Sokhi-Bulley, 2014). Governmentality is, using Foucault's own words "conduct of conducts" (Foucault, 2002, pp. 341 - 362), and it operates to produce a power relation that sees the institutions composing the state as the manager and the population as subject of its management (Foucault, 1977-1978).

The need to "conduct" emerged as a consequence of the evolution and subsequent conceptualisation of the population as a productive power in the sixteenth century and "the exercise of bio-power in its many forms and modes of application" was the tool intended to perpetuate control (Foucault, 1976 p. 141). The definition of biopower is inextricably linked to the concept of biopolitics and vice versa. Biopolitics' focal point is the administration of life and population (Adams, 2017), "to put life into order" (Foucault, 1998, p. 139) and it does so through the use of biopower as the government's tool of management of individual and groups life (Foucault, 1976 pp. 139-140) (Taylor, 2011, p. 44). Biopower studies and regulates the bodies and habits of life as, described by Foucault in "The History of Sexuality Volume I": "propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all



the conditions that can cause these to vary. Their supervision was effected through an entire series of interventions and regulatory controls: a biopolitics of the population.” In order to manage and to put life into order, another key concept that Foucault attributed to the state is to “foster life”. This concept is opposed to the sovereign power’s right to impose death over the population (Taylor, 2011, p. 48). The shift from sovereign power to biopower described by Foucault entails also a shift from sovereign power’s “death as the ultimate expression of power” to the opposite “death as a way to escape power” characteristic of the biopower, officially disqualifying death and making it a taboo (Taylor, 2011, p. 48). States that foster life gradually changed the ways of punishment for the population that do not follow the law from capital punishment to prison for example. This changes follow a conceptual change that, under sovereign power “execution for murder or theft was understood as punishment for having broken the sovereign's law and for undermining his power” (Taylor, 2011 p. 49), while under biopower “a criminal condemned to death must be perceived as a threat to the population rather than to the ruler's power” (Taylor, 2011, p. 49). The state, through biopower, targets the population and its subgroups with demographic sociological or economic studies underpinning birth-rate, longevity, housing or migration interventions aimed to a knowledge production intended to perpetuate control over population. In order to administer life, the state must obtain as many and precise statistic data about the population that has to be administered and the gamechanger has been identified by Foucault in the modern census. Characteristics, structures and trends of a certain population are keen features that a modern state needs to understand in order to manage that population (Taylor, 2011, p. 46).

In order to understand the link between biopower and biometric technology, it is important to bear in mind the ‘behavioural’ component that the definition of ‘biometric’ technology encompasses. At the time Foucault’s studies refer to, biopower was intended as “intervention and regulatory controls” based on human behaviours and habits (Taylor, 2011). According with the more recent technological developments, biopower nowadays serves similar aims but with greater capacities due to the ability of biometric technologies to collect and analyse not only behaviours but physical and personal characteristics, that were impossible to detect back then (UNHCR, n/d, 2).

Given the above-mentioned definition of biopower, the use of this theoretical lens seems reasonable in order to analyse the current deployment of biometric registration as a *sine qua non conditio* in order to allow displaced populations to gain access to humanitarian assistance. More specifically, the thesis at hand is intended to use the biopower theory to analyse how refugees’ biometric features are collected, stored and analysed in order to study and monitor refugees’ habits through the ‘traces’ they leave behind to allow hypothesising and predicting future threats and trends.

## 2.2 Remote policy-experimentation of control

The second lens at support of the analysis of the thesis at hand is what Mark Duffield defines as Cyber Humanitarianism, namely “the increasing reliance of remote and smart Net-based technologies in humanitarian management” (Duffield, 2013). The trend Duffield points out is based on the aid managers’ tendency driving them to work from securitised compounds more and more frequently, rather than among the people they serve.

Duffield attributes the trend due to an “increased perception of risk” that humanitarian managers experience on the field (Duffield, 2013). Cyber humanitarianism is arguably motivated by field-related risks, but it cannot be seen as completely separated from the technological component that allow aid workers to manage humanitarian operations from remote and that triggers a chain reaction that leads to further reliance on these technologies. In

order to empower humanitarian managers to work from securitised compounds what seems to be necessary is a tremendous amount of reliable data that need to be analysed locally and at HQ level in order to compensate the physical absence on the field with the data collections and continuous updates. Recalling Duffield, this thesis questions whether such delicate sources of data are necessary because of real field-related threats, or are unjustified, given that Ugandan settlements are fairly safe from dangers that characterize other emergency areas. This in turn raises issues on the necessity of remote management in this specific context. Biometric data, combined with the biometric traces that refugees leave behind after the registration, is by the thesis at hand considered a reliable source of information on which different stakeholders can base analysis and plans. As argued by Duffield: “Cyber humanitarianism [...] makes possible hyper-bunkered forms of aid management driven by an uncritical technological-determinist vision of modulating the moods, expectations and actions of remote disaster-affected populations (Duffield, 2013). The thesis at hand relies on this concept to analyse a policy experimentation of control that refugees are undergoing from the very first point onwards when their biometric features are captured.

Whilst the Ugandan security situation at settlement level seems to guarantee a certain degree of safety, cyber humanitarianism finds practical confirmation in the Ugandan context. OPM, UN agencies and all major partners Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) usually have a secured compound from where to implement their programmes through smart Net-based technologies and the data retrieved from refugees (Duffield, 2013). Duffield argues that this trend is upheld by a shift from a modernist refugee protection approach to the current “attempts to modulate internal social and economic processes that strengthen the disaster-resilience of vulnerable populations.” (Duffield, 2013). Once again, Duffield’s concepts find confirmation specifically in the Ugandan context where income generating activities, food and cash distribution are exercises aimed to promote refugees’ self-reliance. In agreement with Duffield, this thesis further recognises the shift to refugee management strategies and implementation of these approaches. This thesis also aims at expanding Duffield’s theory by analysing what these forms of remote refugee management entail in terms of UNHCR’s data collection, analysis and monitoring population and predict future threats, with the support of Sandvik’s concepts related to technological deployment in humanitarian operations (Lohne & Sandvik, 2014, p 10). Besides a wide range of personal information and biometric features once refugees submit their data to UNHCR and OPM, these will have information about size and composition of the household, on where they are being relocated, and on where they are supposed to go for food and/or cash distribution. In order to receive these forms of assistance, refugees always have to undergo biometric verification, which also makes it easier to trace refugees’ movements and habits. All these policies and procedures generate an important body of knowledge, which is analysed at both the local and HQ level in order to produce inputs to improve global strategies in refugee-hosting-countries.

Foucault and Duffield provide two different theoretical lenses that give an important contribution in order to investigate if and how biometric registration data give the means to different stakeholders to study displaced populations. The knowledge production related to this data mining could further serve as a basis for policy implementation in humanitarian contexts, to estimate future developments and predict threats and risks. The potential of the binomial biometric registration – data mining does not stop at this. Future developments resulting from the cyber humanitarian policy experimentation can generate a controversial and highly debatable discourse. That being said, the thesis at hand will try to address the most credible outcomes generated by studies on humanitarian contexts for displaced populations, private companies and the Western world.

## 2.3 Protection concerns of biometric deployment in Ugandan refugee settlements

The third and last theoretical lens which the analysis of the thesis at hand will be built upon is Sandvik's concept of humanitarian cyberspace. Sandvik's theory argues that the increasingly frequent deployment of information and communication technologies (ICT) is becoming more and more often the mean through which humanitarian workers serve people of concern, rather than the traditional field-based work (Sandvik, 2015). This concept, through the Ugandan thesis' case study, is intended to investigate whether biometric technology is an asset for future development of humanitarian operations or 'shrinking' the room for humanitarian action and refugee assistance, exposing beneficiaries to further protection concerns (Sandvik, 2015).

Shrinking humanitarian space is a concept that takes into account the sources of field-related threats for humanitarian workers and persons of concern. The consequences of a shrinking humanitarian space are stated by Sandvik as "denial of access to humanitarians, increasing insecurity for humanitarian workers, and declining respect for international humanitarian law (IHL)" (Sandvik, 2015), and consequences affecting humanitarian operations as a whole but inevitably hitting refugees twice. In such a scenario, technologies that allow humanitarian workers to assist displaced populations from remote seems to be a strong asset for refugee management but, as Duffield argued: "Rather than uncritically embracing this future, humanitarian agencies need to understand what exactly they are buying into." (Duffield, 2013). Humanitarian operations vary from country to country and so do the related threats; as argued by both Sandvik and Duffield, a risk assessment to address whether remote assistance, motivated by fieldwork related risks, is necessary. What the thesis at hand argues is that Uganda does not present such risks, the heavy deployment of ICT and smart Net-based technologies does not seem fundamental as much as in other areas presenting more dangerous threats.

The humanitarian cyberspace theory's contribution to the thesis at hand is important in order to analyse protection risks refugees are exposed to, before, during and after biometric registration. The risks taken into consideration are several and inherent to different sources of threat. First of all, the analysis chapter will argue that the mere fact of giving to humanitarian managers the technological means and advices to work from remote bunkers is decreasing the quality of the service provision, exposing refugees to other hypothetical sources of harm. Secondly, biometric registration and related personal data can be seen as a source of threat due to cyber-attacks driven by governments or individual hackers (Parker, 2020). Even when not stolen, biometric data can turn into harmful sources due to not clear data-sharing policies that could potentially be subject of function creep (Madianou, 2019). The last theme that needs to be mentioned regards the registration process refugees needs to undergo in order to receive humanitarian assistance, for example when it comes to religious objections and what happen in case beneficiaries refuse to be biometrically enrolled in the UNHCR's system. Humanitarian cyberspace will not only serve as an analysis aimed to criticise the biometric deployment in Ugandan humanitarian operations. It is a lens that allows also to investigate new dimensions and opportunities coming from biometric implementation and so is the intention of the thesis (Sandvik, 2015).

The above-mentioned theories will serve as the theoretical basis for the analysis. In summary, biopower theory will be used in order to analyse the control and power policies refugees need to undergo in order to receive humanitarian assistance that they deserve because of the refugee status they obtained in *prima facie*, despite the information UNHCR and OPM require from them. Cyber humanitarianism takes into account the biometric data that UNHCR collect as a piece of a puzzle that pictures the tendency of a tech-based remote refugee management, policy experimentation of control and the data mining that provide findings which potentially play into the hands of Western world and private companies. Lastly,

humanitarian cyberspace will analyse assets linked to the technological deployment in humanitarian operations and protection risks that beneficiaries are exposed to due biometric registration and its poor data protection framework.

### **3.0 Methodology**

This chapter will explain which methodological approach will be applied to the theoretical frameworks mentioned above and the reasons why these methods have been selected.

In order to investigate UNHCR and OPM's deployment of biometric registration in a satisfactory manner, one single research method is not providing the necessary means to fulfil all focuses the thesis is aimed to cover. The methodologies chosen to support the analysis are five and each of them intends to cover specific aspects of the field of research, and namely: the advantages related to the deployment of this technology for UNHCR and OPM managing the Ugandan refugee response; how refugees can be considered as a subject of control and study in order to produce gains for different Western state and non-state actors; and lastly to what risks are refugees exposed when undergoing this registration process in Ugandan settlements. The first subsection of the analysis will look at the Ugandan approach towards refugees, including general statistics, stakeholders and detailed practices that take place on the field on a daily base. Secondly, a literature review based on Foucault, Duffield and Sandvik will compare their theoretical lenses with the Ugandan context of biometric registration in order to see how these lenses apply to the case study and to set out a preliminary problem context that will be further analysed in the chapter that will follow. The third subchapter will include a policy review of UNHCR's registration framework documents that will try to shed light on the practices of data sharing, protection, privacy and the general standard of the exercise. Alongside the policy analysis, the findings of qualitative data collection aimed at professionals working for UNHCR, together with field notes generated during two field missions in Ugandan refugee settlements, will cross-check the field-reliability of the official standards set out in the two documents. Lastly, a desk review of academic papers pertaining to the same field of research will serve to link the findings generated from the policy analysis - cross-checked with qualitative data and field notes - with the challenges reported on existing literature about Ugandan biometric registration. This will be done to confirm the findings and to contribute to the existing literature on assets, risks and potential ethic concerns related to biometric registration.

#### **3.1 Literature review**

After having provided the details of the Ugandan refugee response and the different actors that play a role in the biometric application in refugee settlements, this literature review will apply to this context the three theoretical concepts of Foucault, Duffield and Sandvik. The aim of the literature review is to conceptualize for the first time sensitive and problematic aspects of biometric registration with the support of the theories of biopower, cyber humanitarianism and humanitarian cyberspace that will be further analysed in the following chapter. Specifically, biopower theory will raise concerns about the assumption that refugees are subject of the state and non-state actors' control and that, in order to be recognized as refugees, they must give up part of their freedom with their biodata and biometric data. Cyber humanitarianism will support the analysis-reading through the increased reliance on net-based technologies, namely biometrics in the Ugandan case study, as an uncritical tool of refugee management that could possibly shape refugees as a subject of analysis and experimentation that exposes them to

further harm. The analysis based on refugees' data is assumed to be a tool in the hands of UNHCR and OPM, who aim at identifying trends about habits, movements and common characteristic of both refugees in Uganda and of those that are about to be displaced, allowing state and non-state actors to set up response plans. Furthermore, data sharing practices that allow UNHCR to share refugees' data with third parties could be analysed by foreign governments thus providing them with the means to base their migration agenda on these data. This in turn could possibly affect refugees of today and tomorrow with unpredictable outcomes. Lastly, humanitarian cyberspace will support the analysis addressing the programmatic advantages of refugee biometric registration as well as the protection risks and ethical concerns refugees are exposed to when giving up their data.

### **3.2 Policy analysis**

The second methodological approach that will be used in order to shed a light on the complicated and unclear policies regulating biometric registration is a policy analysis. It will assess whether or not the policies set out by the HQ, ideally valid for all UNHCR operations worldwide, are actually respected in the Ugandan refugee settlements. In order to do so, these two policy documents will be cross-checked with field notes and the qualitative data collections conducted in Kyaka II and Rhino Camp refugee settlements. The policy analysis will be based on documents made public by UNHCR and inter-agency documents that set collaboration standards between UNHCR, OPM and other partner organizations.

The policy analysis will be based on two pillar documents:

- 1) UNHCR, "Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of People of Concern to UNHCR", May 2015.
- 2) UNHCR, "Handbook for Registration, Procedures and Standards for Registration, Population Data Management and Documentation", 2003.

The analysis on the first mentioned document is aimed to establish whether refugees' data are adequately protected by UNHCR against unregulated data sharing practices with partner organisations, host governments and countries of origin. Furthermore, this first document sets the purpose and principles of respecting refugees' data, as well as the confidentiality, security and accountability related to such sensitive sources of information. The second document is a highly technical handbook that reports the standards that need to be respected in order to successfully register and manage population data. It encompasses the most common protection issues among refugees, the different stages that compose a completed registration, how to register different classes of beneficiaries, who is responsible for them, and several more sensitive aspects that will be analysed in detail in the next chapters. The idea behind the policy analysis of the three above-mentioned documents is to address the standard principles stated in the text to then verify whether these principles are respected on the Ugandan reception centres where the registration of newcomers takes place.

### 3.3 Qualitative data collection and field notes

The choice to conduct a qualitative data collection directed to humanitarian workers has been made due to the unclear data collection standards regulating biometric data and due to a long history of vulnerability to function creep of such sources of data involving UNHCR and refugee-host governments (Jacobsen, 2015, p. 156). Furthermore, the documents regulating biometric registration are world-wide valid, the questions will intent to understand if the standards stated by humanitarian managers in Geneva match with the field-based biometric implementation as well as to identify gaps and challenges of such biometric deployment.

The tools used to approach humanitarian workers are structured and semi-structured interviews that allow a certain answer-oriented focus but also a degree of flexibility to move the point of conversation according to the insights received. The questions will cover aspects of UNHCR's biometric enrolment procedure, duration of the process, different stages of registrations and common technical or ethical issues regarding cultural or religious objections. The second area of investigation will focus on data-sharing rules, privacy policies and function creeps. In the end, an open question to collect opinions about how to improve the process will follow.

Alongside the qualitative data collection, field notes generated during two field missions in two different refugee settlements will also be used as a tool to fact-check what is reported by the two policy documents under analysis. This is an important source of data due to the sensitive nature of the data collection questionnaire. The interviewed humanitarian workers could have perceived some questions as particularly delicate and they might have been uncomfortable in answering such questions, and therefore the participatory observations from the two reception centres is considered here as an added analysis value for the methodology of this chapter. Qualitative data and field notes have been collected during two field missions. The first field mission was conducted between the 13<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> December 2019 in Kyaka II refugee settlement. Field notes related to the biometric deployment in Kyaka II were generated through participatory observations at the reception centre, at protection houses as well as during relocation exercises. The qualitative data was collected during an interview with the base manager of a international NGO and who will be referenced throughout the thesis as Informer 1. Informer 1 is a 28 year old Italian female manager, who has worked in Kyaka II and specifically on food-security and livelihoods operations. The second field mission was conducted in Rhino Camp refugee settlement between the 27<sup>th</sup> January and the 7<sup>th</sup> February 2020. Two weeks of participatory observations at the OCEA reception centre have been crucial for the data collection process as well as the Informer 2 who had been interviewed at the reception centre. Informer 2 is a 30 year old Ugandan male, working as UNHCR senior registration assistant. A third informer (Informer 3 – 40 year old Ugandan male) based at the Kampala UNHCR country office as senior registration officer provided qualitative data from a capital office perspective. A map highlighting the locations of data collection can be seen below.

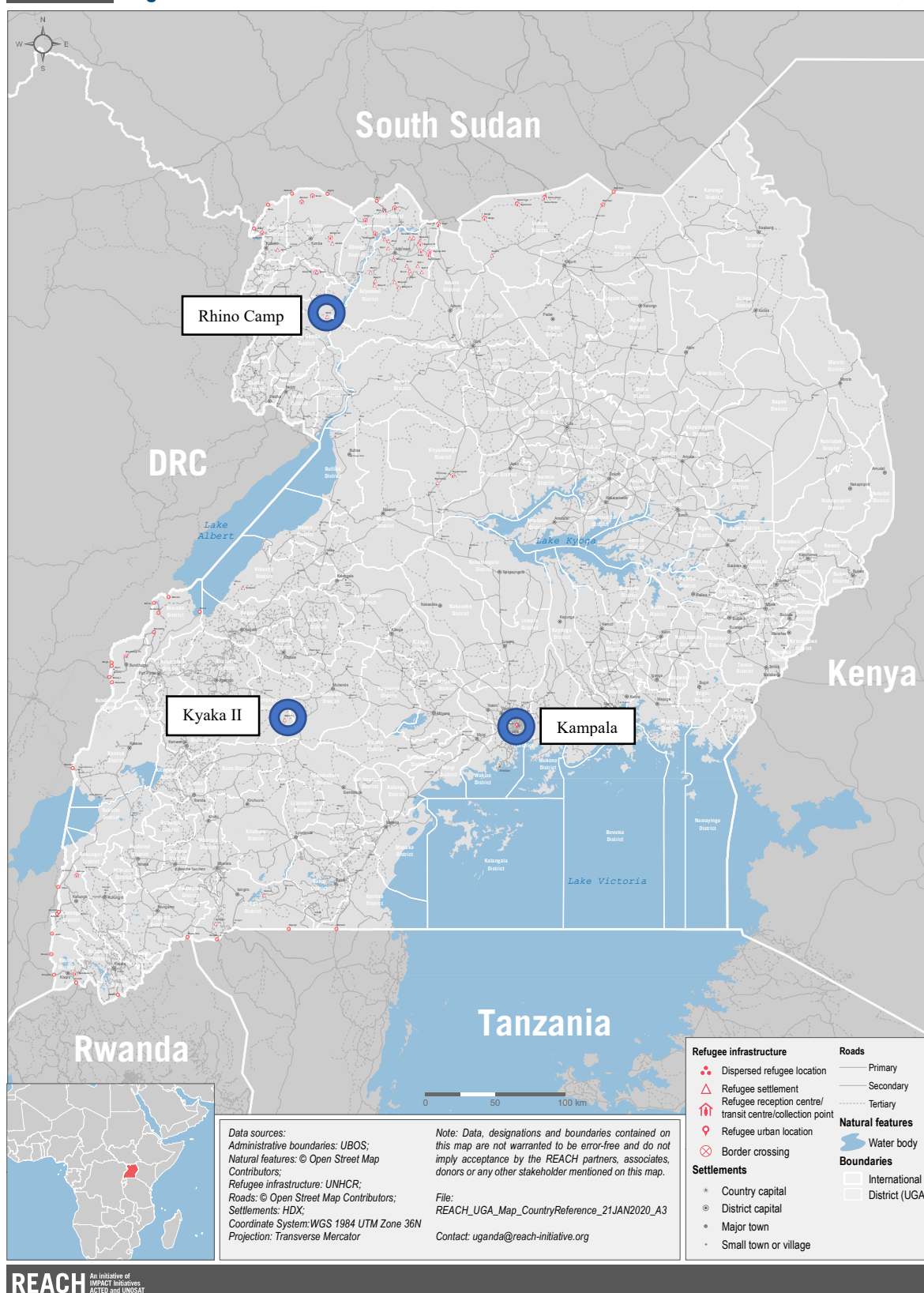


Figure 1: Map of Ugandan refugee settlements (REACH, 2020)

### **3.4 Desk review**

The last methodological approach shaping the analysis will be a desk review of academic papers and articles that previously handled aspects related to the thesis at hand. The desk review approach focusses on highlighting relevant trends of the discourse around biometric registration. This method will be centred on protection risks and ethical issues linked to the deployment of biometric technology as a registration tool in order to confirm the findings elaborated before and to contribute to the existing literature about Ugandan biometric registrations for refugees. Key among the macro themes characterising this last method are cyber-attacks that the United Nation recently suffered from, potentially posing refugees' data and identities at risk (Parker, 2020). Other important issues will be analysed such as the consequences for beneficiaries that refuse to be biometrically registered, or the spontaneous asylum seekers that resettle themselves in Ugandan settlements, not following the standard registration procedure and not knowing what they would face. Unregistered children are a common trend amongst the Ugandan humanitarian scene, and serious protection concerns deriving from this habit will be a specific aspect of focus. Ethical and religious issues concerning biometric registration and the use of these data will be also a focus of the desk review (Lodinova, 2016).

### **3.5 My own positionality**

This brief subchapter will explain the circumstance in which this thesis developed, the reasons behind the focus/topic selection and the positionality of the author as both a humanitarian worker and researcher.

Since the very inception of thesis, I was based in Uganda, working as an intern for the Danish Refugee Council protection department. The internship took place between the DRC Kampala country office and two refugee settlements where DRC was implementing protection programmes, and namely Kyaka II and Rhino Camp. I spent one week in Kyaka II, between the 13<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> December 2019, and two weeks in Rhino Camp between the 27<sup>th</sup> January and 7<sup>th</sup> February 2020. During these two field missions I had the chance to conduct participatory observations in the reception centres of the two settlements, in order to identify trends, gaps and challenges related to UNHCR biometric registration. I also had the chance to meet UNHCR registration officers who have then been interviewed and I kept a diary of both missions to have field notes to be used as data for the thesis. These two field mission have been useful to gain insights on sensitive aspects of biometric registration, which are not captured within UNHCR framework documents. The direct observation of registration-related protection concerns have been a critical source of data, which helped in shaping the field of research throughout the whole research process. Moreover, during these missions, the network of colleagues working for DRC or other partner NGOs I have met have been extremely useful to understand complex registration procedures and their practical limits.

### **3.6 Limitations**

The internship contract described in the previous subchapter was meant to entail seven field missions between December 2019 and April 2020, and specifically in the following refugee settlements: one in Kyaka II, three in Rhino camp and three in Kiryandongo. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak the whole planning for the second half of the internship was inevitably



affected. This led to reduce the settlements selected for data collection from three to two, and the actual chances to conduct participatory observations and interviews from seven weeks to three. At the same time, this does not undermine the quality of the data given that the two settlements are still representative of the Ugandan refugee context being one settlement in the Northern region, mainly affected by the South-Sudanese (longer-term) crisis and the other in the South-West of the country, which was most recently affected by the Congolese influx. Whilst the possibility to travel to the settlement could not realize, the data collection continued from Kampala. However, COVID-19 and the strict regulations imposed by the Ugandan government, including closure of public offices contributed to hinder the remote collection. To address this limit, questionnaires have been sent to several UNHCR registration officers both in Kyaka II and Rhino Camp but, due to competing priorities for the field teams such as soap and hand sanitizer distributions, as well as sensitization campaigns, the staff was less responsive and therefore the data collection delayed and in some cases cancelled. This in turn heavily reduced the quantity and quality of the data to be retrieved and analysed.

Another limitation relates to language barriers. Specifically, is this thesis was initially meant to conduct a qualitative data collection with both UNHCR employees and beneficiaries in order to give voice to both registration personnel and refugees involved in the biometric registration process. This was however not feasible because no refugee could speak English. Whilst there was the chance to ask for an interpreter working for DRC the interviews with beneficiaries would have taken away precious time that has instead been used to translate protection-related conversations with PSNs instead. Whilst it would have been interesting to add these perspectives it was decided not to overburden the translators, who were already dealing with numerous challenges at the reception centres. This however does not undermine the overall quality of the thesis which rather focuses on policies and practices put in place but those who exert “control” over the beneficiaries.

## 4.0 Analysis

This chapter aims to merge the three selected theoretical lenses with the three methodologies used to retrieve data, in order to adequately answer the research question. This analysis intends to shed light on the many different outcomes that UNHCR biometric registration has on refugees seeking protection in Uganda and on UNHCR operations. It will explain to what threats refugees are exposed in terms of cyber-security and data sharing policies as well as how UNHCR operations are both facilitated and compromised by the implementation of programmes based on the analysis of refugees’ data rather than on field-based experience at village level. Lastly, the purpose of data sharing practices with state and non-state actors will be investigated in order to understand how the data analysis by different stakeholders can affect current and future refugees.

Foucault’s biopower theoretical lens will serve to analysed how refugees are controlled and monitored by humanitarian agencies and OPM with the consequent ethical gaps. Duffield’s cyber humanitarianism theory will look into the consequences of biometric registration as a tool for the remote management of refugees and how the data analysis of this information is played in the hands of state-actors non-involved directly in the Uganda refugee response. Ultimately, Sandvik’s humanitarian cyberspace theory will provide the means to understand whether biometric registration must be seen as an asset for the Ugandan refugee response or a threat to the physical security and privacy of displaced population in the Ugandan refugee settlements.

The set of methodological tools that have been used to analyse this field of research as well as to retrieve the necessary data include: a literature review that will apply the three

theoretical lenses to the specific context of the Ugandan case study to see how these theoretical frameworks will help to analyse different aspects of the biometric registration; secondly, a policy analysis of two pillar-documents that establish the frameworks of how to implement biometric registration exercises as well as data sharing policies and protection of the data, will be cross-checked with field notes and a qualitative data collection directed to humanitarian officials, in order to understand if the field reality matches with what is set out in the policy documents; lastly, a desk review will link the problematic aspects emerged during the analysis with the existing literature on Ugandan refugee response and biometric technology in order to confirm the outcomes of the research and to contribute to the existing literature with new findings.

## **4.1 Ugandan context information**

As introduction to the specific case study, this subchapter will provide information about the regional situational analysis concerning countries that share a border with Uganda and whose population is recognised as refugees in Uganda. Furthermore, Ugandan specific situational analysis and its refugee approach will be assessed. Lastly, a specific focus will be placed on the two refugee settlements where the data of this analysis come from with a stress on biometric registration and the tools that help UNHCR and OPM deployed in order to manage the refugee population.

Uganda is an East African country that borders with Kenya on the East, with Rwanda and Tanzania on the South, with the Democratic Republic of Congo on the West and South Sudan on the North. Both the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan are going through years of instability due to ethnic conflicts, Ebola outbreaks and, generally, a weak presence of the State. Being part of such an instable region, Uganda has always been at the forefront of the regional refugee response and, as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020, Uganda was hosting 1,423,377 refugees and asylum seekers. Among those, the 65.5% of the refugee population were South Sudanese, 30.9% from Democratic Republic of Congo and the 3.6% Burundians (UNHCR, 2020). With almost 1,5 million refugees, Uganda is by number the first refugee-host country in Africa, the third worldwide after Turkey and Pakistan and its open-door approach towards refugees is generally considered as one of the most progressive and generous existing (World Bank. 2018). Refugees seeking protection in Uganda can enjoy a wide range of services as the rights to documentation, school, a plot of land where to grow crops and other support and protection services provided by UNHCR, OPM and other implementing partners. The Ugandan refugee approach is in line with the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) set out in the New York Declaration on Refugee and Migrants but, such a generous approach is still upheld by one of the most underfunded UNHCR operation in the world (Burt, 2018). The refugees Uganda is protecting are spread among thirteen urban and rural settlements, most of them located in border zones. The two refugee settlements where data has been collected from are Kyaka II in South-Western Uganda (Kyegegwa District) and Rhino Camp in North Western Uganda (Arua District). Both settlements host around 120,000 refugees and both cover an area of more than 50 square kilometers. In these areas the mobile network is very poor even for humanitarian organizations thus for refugees is twice as tough to move within the settlement, with the logistic consequences analyzed below. These settlements are remote areas where OPM makes available land for humanitarian organizations in order to let them set up their basecamps and implement refugee assistance. Among the land provided by OPM, there are the plots of land that refugee households are assigned to, where they can build a shelter and grow crops. Moving around the settlement, the feeling is not the

typical one of a refugee camp. There is not a real “camp” perception and no fences, overcrowdings or heavy security deployments. The area is immense and divided into smaller, remote zones or villages, where UNHCR and OPM relocate refugees moving from the reception centre to their assigned plots of land. In the remote zones and villages refugees are relocated to, the daily presence of humanitarian workers resulted minimum from the field mission conducted. All UN agencies, governmental organizations and NGOs have their field offices in the same area of the settlement in order to make the partnerships easier between each other but at the same time making it more difficult and expensive to serve the beneficiaries in the villages that are reached only for food or cash distributions or individual protection case management home visits.

#### **4.1.1 Registration process in the Uganda refugee system**

Displaced populations that decide to cross an international border in order to seek protection in the Ugandan territory are ideally supposed to present themselves at the entry points set up in border zones with Uganda and other countries. A very first population screen takes place at these entry points facilities to then move the asylum seekers to the Ugandan reception centres according to nationality, ethnicity and reception capabilities of each settlement in order to start the registration process.

The initial stage of the registration process begins with “reception and fixing of people of concern” with the purpose of determine whether individuals are eligible for refugee status as well as to determine their immediate priorities and needs (UNHCR, 2003, p. 137). Displaced populations seeking asylum in Uganda can do so in two ways. The vast majority of asylum seekers are South Sudanese and Congolese. These two nationalities are recognized as refugees in *prima facie* upon arrival at the reception center due to ongoing disorders in their respective countries of origin. On the other hand, asylum seekers from other countries need to go through an individual Refugee Status Determination (RSD) process that will assess the allegations of persecution in order to be recognized as refugees by the Government of Uganda (GoU). The next step of registration for refugees in Uganda recognized in *prima facie* is an interview that in the Ugandan refugee settlements is called “nationality screening”, which aims to ensure the effective nationalities from either Democratic Republic of Congo or South Sudan. At this stage of the process, UNHCR protection and registration staff schedule individual interviews with PoCs, who are asked questions about the county of origin that only natives would know (UNHCR, 2003, p. 144). Once the nationality of a certain PoC has been categorized, another interview takes place, this called “profiling” and has the aim of collecting a wide range of biodata to be later linked with the biometric ones. The data UNHCR and OPM are collecting from new arrivals include name, sex, country of origin, date and place of birth, date of arrival in Uganda and any eventual protection and special assistance need. These data must be collected for every single family or household member. Moreover, in addition to these data, reception centers’ professionals must record other sources of data that is more difficult to find a clear protection-related explanation such as level of education, occupational skills, religion, ethnic group, household representative and ownership of properties (UNHCR, 2003, Annex 7). The last step before relocation within the settlement for refugees seeking protection in Uganda is the biometric registration. Every household member, including children, elderly, disables, etc., need to go through this process and different stages. Every household member needs to be photographed at first, secondly it is necessary to provide all ten fingerprints and lastly the iris scan of both eyes. At the end of the process, UNHCR and OPM registration officers and assistants will merge the biodata collected at the beginning with the biometric data obtained through the registration. The biodata collected from each family is stored in the UNHCR

identity management software called ProGres which is integrated by the Biometric Identity Management System (BIMS) that stores the biometric data specifically (Shoemaker et al., 2019). The outcome of this process is the so-called “control sheet” document, where all the information about all household members are reported with pictures, representatives’ names and future address where the family will be relocated.

## **4.2 Preliminary problem context**

The subchapter at hand will link the three theoretical frameworks chosen for the analysis with the Ugandan context of biometric registration. The aim of this subchapter is to understand how the theoretical lenses apply to the Ugandan context, composing a preliminary problem context related to the biometric registration of refugees seeking protection in Uganda. The problematic aspects that the three theories will firstly assess, will be later analysed in depth with a policy analysis, the interviews and the field notes.

### **4.2.1 Ethical control-related concerns of refugee management**

In relation with biometric registration technology, many are the sensitive topics that can be read through Foucault’s theories. Biopower understood as a “population management tool” (Sokhi-Bulley, 2014) in the hands of governments pursuing the control of their population, shares many characteristics with biometric technology when looking at the purpose of its deployment in Ugandan refugee settlements. Even though Foucault’s focus concerned the unequal power relation represented by the governmentality that sees the state as manager and the population as the subject of its management (Foucault, 1977-1978), this concept is suitable and necessary in order to analyse the management of large displaced populations in a host country. In light of this, the Foucauldian “state” is here represented by OPM, as a refugee-host state-actor partly responsible for the life of refugees; on the other hand, UNHCR is also understood as the manager of refugee’s life in the Ugandan territory and beyond. What Foucault defined as “population” is, in this case, not the entire population of Uganda but rather the refugee population that Uganda hosts and that needs to be controlled. The conceptualization of population as a productive power of the sixteenth century triggered the state’s need to conduct and control them through biopower in order to not lose the grip on them (Foucault, 1976, p. 141). As understood above, refugees seeking protection in Uganda are not only a burden for the state, but they are also allowed to study, to build themselves a shelter and to take part in the host-state development working in many forms. Furthermore, when hosting almost 1.5 million refugees that fled from ethnic violence, the risk that such ethnicities will bring to Uganda the violence that made them flee is likely and has occurred before. Conceptualizing the refugee population as both productive power and a threat for domestic security constitute two powerful reasons why biopower, under the form of biometric registration, could play a fundamental role in managing refugees while benefitting from them. “Propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary” (Foucault, 1976, pp. 139-140) are all subjects of study and regulation of biopower as well as of the UNHCR and OPM data collection and analysis. The information that UNHCR and OPM require from asylum seekers are more than adequate to study the above-mentioned areas of analysis and, in addition, these areas are subject to UNHCR’s interventions and controls with humanitarian aims that often overlap with the biopower concept of control.

Prior to the biometric registration exercise implemented in Uganda in 2018, the number of refugees and subgroups breakdown composition was not as precise as today, after the

universal biometric registration for all refugees seeking protection in Uganda. That operation was in fact a census aimed to retrieve data from all refugees in the country in order to constitute the base line of the data-analysis that is continuously updated with newborns, deaths or new arrivals. As argued by Diana Taylor, who based her assumptions on Foucault's studies, the modern census are a key tool that allows the state to retrieve the necessary population information as characteristics, structures and trends, in order to administer life of the data subjects (Taylor, 2011, p. 46). As for the census, the initial biometric deployment in Uganda serves as an immense source of data for UNHCR and OPM to administer refugee's life. Once refugees are enrolled in ProGress and BIMS, UNHCR and OPM dispose of all the necessary individual and family information such as household composition, ages and sexes of all family members, address, phone number, level of education, occupational skills and eventual ownership of land. All these information are linked with portraits, finger prints, iris scans, biometric data that they must use in order to get humanitarian assistance during food and cash distributions thus leaving behind the "traces" of their presence among the settlement and, in case they would leave the area, these biometric features would guarantee a way to trace refugees' movements if intercepted by the police. Furthermore, these data are potentially able to serve as a base for the data analysis aimed to study and identify common trends of the refugee population and its subgroups. This is a knowledge production that, once again, identifies refugees as in a disadvantaged position and state or non-state actors with a larger room for decision making.

#### **4.2.2 Outcomes of remote data analysis**

On top of the control-related problematic aspects of biometric technology, Duffield's cyber humanitarianism theory will serve to understand the reasons underpinning the biometric technology deployment and its consequences. Cyber humanitarianism is understood as the "increasing reliance of remote and smart Net-based technologies in humanitarian management" (Duffield, 2013) and the consequent trend that sees field-based humanitarian managers working from their securitized compound rather than among refugees' communities. According to Duffield, this trend is motivated by an increased perception of risk that aid managers experience in field operations and that, in the long run, will lead to a chain reaction causing further deployment of remote-control technologies rather than embracing a more field-minded approach. The analysis at hand suggests that cyber humanitarianism is a trend that is shaping all humanitarian operations worldwide despite the different degrees of field-related risks of each location.

The concept of cyber humanitarianism can clearly be motivated by the extreme circumstances some humanitarian workers are faced with. During the first seven months of 2019, eighteen humanitarian workers have been killed in Syria, seven in Afghanistan, five in Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo, three in Nigeria and two in South Sudan, Chad and Somalia (Reliefweb, 2019). In such hostile work environments, where humanitarian workers operate between governmental military forces and militias, what Duffield defines as "perception of risk" (Duffield, 2013) can plausibly push humanitarian workers towards forms of remote management due to real field-related threats. Humanitarian professionals' life in Ugandan settlements is surely harsh but, according to empiric personal experience in different Ugandan settlements, no beneficiary nor military was perceived as a threat to the security of humanitarian workers. Furthermore, Uganda has not reported any casualty since 2005, when two humanitarian workers have been killed by suspected LRA (Lord's Resistance Army) fighters (The New Humanitarian, 2005). Uganda has been marked with a level of risk of 2 out of 4 from the US department of State (with one as the lowest level

of risk and four as the maximum) (U.S. Department of State, 2019), differently from states mentioned earlier that reported casualties among aid workers in 2019. Refugee settlements are clearly zones where all standard precautions measures need to be taken. That being said, the trend described by cyber humanitarianism, i.e. the continuous tendency of humanitarian professionals working more and more from securitized compounds rather than among the people they serve, is not really applicable to the Ugandan field-related threats. Being the Ugandan security situation stable enough to guarantee safe circumstances to humanitarian professionals to work, the strategic approach being implemented worldwide more and more often does not take into consideration regional, state and even settlement related threats. In order to compensate the sporadic presence of aid managers at village level, refugee's data are more necessary than ever. The lack of empiric field-experience is compensated by the incredible amount of data that UNHCR and OPM is demanding from refugees. After the initial data collection taking place at the reception centers, aid managers at field office, regional office and HQ have a baseline of data necessary for a refugee's behavioral analysis, to identify trends and to plan the future strategy of remote refugee management. The Ugandan CRRF is very much based on the UNHCR's standards to deliver this vision, namely, among others, the objective to build refugees' self-reliance (UNHCR, n/d). The Government of Uganda (GoU) does so providing to refugees' the means to help themselves growing crops that they could eat or sell, or with incentives for income-generating activities. Duffield describes this trend as an "attempt to modulate internal social and economic processes that strengthen the disaster-resilience of vulnerable populations" (Duffield, 2013) that uphold the remote management of refugees, not only from the securitized compound at field level but also from the regional and HQ offices.

Cyber humanitarianism will serve as a lens to analyze the remote refugee management taking place at different level of the refugee response, how this source of data will be analyzed and how the findings will be shared with different state and non-state actors that can base their future refugee policies accordingly, potentially based on what is best for the host state rather than for humanitarian purposes.

#### **4.2.3 Biometric threats**

On a similar note of what argued by Duffield, Sandvik's concept of humanitarian cyberspace will serve to understand whether biometric registration, together with all aspects analyzed below, can be seen as a tool able to improve life of refugees and UNHCR operations in Uganda, or if it expose refugees to totally new sources of protection concerns.

According to Sandvik, ICTs as biometric registration tools are preferred because of the "shrinking humanitarian space" due to field-related threats (Sandvik, 2015). Technologies that allow a remote refugee management seem to guarantee the safety of humanitarian workers but, at the same time, they expose refugee's data to new forms of insecurity and potential persecution. What both Sandvik and Duffield argue is that humanitarian agencies are uncritically embracing these new technologies without taking into consideration what they are exactly buying into (Duffield, 2013). In light of this, humanitarian cyberspace will help to analyze how, in a fairly secure context, biometric registration helps refugees at different stages of being refugees and, on the other hand, how this technological deployment and consequent remote management is compromising the security of refugees and UNHCR operations. The sensitive aspects that will be analyzed range from the threat of cyber-attack that would put at risk refugees' data, to unclear data sharing policies that could potentially lead sensitive data to the hands of countries that could directly or indirectly persecute refugees or, to how the decreasing presence of humanitarian workers at village level is increasing the expenditure

budget to serve these refugees. Furthermore, ethical aspects that biometric registration does not take into consideration will be investigated as well as the consequences of being an unregistered refugee in Uganda.

### 4.3 Policy analysis through qualitative data collection

The following chapter entails a policy analysis of two pillar-documents regulating UNHCR's data protection practices and registration procedure and a comparison of these frameworks with what emerged from the field missions and interviews. The analysis will be done in two phases that move in parallel along the chapter. On one hand, several aspects retrieved from the policy documents will be analysed through the three theoretical lenses selected for this thesis, and namely: Biopower, Cyber-Humanitarianism, and Humanitarian Cyberspace. The aspects that these two technical documents recognise as standard principles to be respected during the data collection of refugee's information and the outcome in the post registration, will be cross-checked with what emerged from the interviews with humanitarian workers and the field notes related to what happens or not on the field, which often differs from what stated in the policy documents under analysis. This methodology is aimed to shed light on the complicated UNHCR's frameworks regulating biometric registration and to see whether these frameworks are in fact implemented on the field. Furthermore, the aim of this research method is on one hand to assess the ideal procedure of biometric registration for refugees seeking protection in Uganda as UNHCR and OPM envision it, and, on the other, to analyse whether the procedure falls short in regards to several aspects that affect refugee's life before, during and after registration. What the analysis will focus on are the several aspects of the registration and post-registration practices, which are crucial for the research question of this thesis. This includes necessary data that UNHCR and OPM need from refugees in order to plan an adequate refugee response, as well as why and by whom these data are analysed, and lastly the protection risks that refugees are exposed to when giving up their data.

The first document under analysis in this chapter is the "Policy of the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR", published in May 2015.

The purpose of this first document is to define rules and principles to be respected and adhered to when collecting, processing and sharing personal data of persons of concern (PoC) from UNHCR (UNHCR, 2015, p. 7). This policy document presents a number of aspects that can be analysed through all the three theoretical lenses previously exposed. These aspects can be resumed at first with some macro topics:

The first topic under analysis is the *Data sharing policies* with implementing partners organizations or "third party" therefore "national governments, international governmental or non-governmental organizations, private sector entities or individuals." (UNHCR, 2015, p. 13). With whom UNHCR and OPM will share the data retrieved from refugees is extremely relevant because of the risks of misuse, function creep and cyber-security that these data are exposed to once collected and being shared, putting at risk also the owners of the data. The second aspect under analysis is *UNHCR data protection policies*. This will shed light on how UNHCR and its implementing partners are ready to face various sources of threats that could put at risk the data of refugees seeking protection in Uganda. The last topic will be *Rights of data subjects*, which is understood as a range of services that PoCs can benefit from during and after registration. This is a crucial subject in order to understand the degree of awareness that refugees have about the reasons behind the need to provide the data they are requested by UNHCR and OPM. Furthermore, it highlights an asymmetric power relation between refugees and different stakeholders that can potentially threaten the refugee's life in the settlement if they would refuse to undergo the registration process.

Each one of these topics will serve as a basis for the analysis in order to identify gaps and challenges in the processing of PoCs personal data, to determine whether this procedure is suitable for field implementation or not, to detect discrepancies between what stated in the document under analysis and what actually happens on the field, and lastly to assess how the biometric registration process affects the life of refugees.

#### **4.3.1 Data sharing policies**

As reported in the “Policy of the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR”, data processing might take place in one UNHCR office or in two UNHCR offices in the same or in different countries (UNHCR, 2015, p. 8). This means that fingerprints, face and iris images retrieved from refugees in Uganda are processed, analysed and stored in databases located not only in Uganda but possibly in a second country such as Kenya where the UNHCR regional office is located and most likely in Geneva, at the UNHCR headquarter. In this regard, while interviewing a senior UNHCR registration assistant working at OCEA reception centre in Rhino Camp, this interconnectivity aspect emerged as an important turning point that differentiates the new BIMS (biometric identity management system) and ProGres V4 from the traditional data management system used before. Previously to BIMS, Ugandan authorities were biometrically registering refugees by collecting their thumb prints and, more importantly, this system was storing the data offline. With the new data management systems introduced by UNHCR “The (...) system shares data globally, instantly. In case refugees move to other settlement or state, they will be recognised as a second timers instantly” (Informer 2, 2020). This goes even beyond the assumption that biometric data from refugees seeking protection in Uganda were shared, processed and analysed with the regional office and the HQ, through the above mentioned data management systems, UNHCR offices around the world could access to these data in order to identify trends that could concern their duty station in the future. At the same time this increases the risk of misuse and illicit appropriation of data.

Through Foucault’s concept of biopower it seems reasonable to argue that the “global” and “instant” components of the way UNHCR shares data has important consequences on how refugees can be pictured as a subject of control. If a refugee registered in Uganda would decide to move to another settlement or country, she or he “will be recognised as a second timer instantly” (Informer 2, 2020) and eventually relocated to her or his plot of land temporarily donated by OPM. Furthermore, the data-sharing taking place between the global South (in this case Uganda) and North (here Europe) can be seen as a way to identify migration trends, predict future threats and, in other words, to perpetuate control over the owners of the data retrieved on the field. The “increasing reliance on remote, net-based technologies in humanitarian management” (Duffield, 2013) has also been captured by Duffield as an inner tendency of cyber humanitarianism, i.e. the shift from a face-to-face relation between humanitarian workers on the field and beneficiaries, to a “face-to-screen” relation with humanitarian managers at regional or headquarter offices, who are ultimately responsible for strategic decisions directly affecting displaced populations without having the empiric, daily experience from the field (Duffield, 2013). In light of what cyber-humanitarianism has to say about biometric data as remote management tool, this thesis further argues that data, if not matched with empirical experience derived from the Ugandan settlements, could possibly lead to misunderstandings and incorrect analysis that could affect refugees’ life on Ugandan settlement. Furthermore, besides UNHCR’s strategic decisions based on the analysis of biometric data retrieved from Ugandan refugee settlements, the sharing of data with several UNHCR offices in different geographic locations is considered by the thesis at hand dangerous for the PoCs’ data holders. This is because, paraphrasing Sandvik, “Structural vulnerabilities inherent in the humanitarian cyberspace can shape the conditions of humanitarian action: like other forms of critical



information infrastructure, the information technology that humanitarians use daily to collect data and transfer resources is inherently insecure.” Namely, doubling or tripling the databases protecting biometric data increases the chances that those databases might be violated by cyber-attacks. Cyber-threats can take advantage of the weaknesses characterizing the humanitarian cyberspace “By taking advantage of numerous vulnerabilities, [attackers can] penetrate, disrupt, disable, steal or destroy communications, vital information and operating systems on which humanitarian systems and networks depend.” (Sandvik, 2015).

When speaking about data sharing policies with humanitarian workers on the field it does not seem that their view about the potential risks concerning how and with whom UNHCR shares PoCs data matches with what has been argued so far. When asking who UNHCR shares refugee’s data with, both informers number 2 from Rhino Camp and 3 from Kampala did not seem worry about risks nor he seemed aware with whom UNHCR can actually share the data with. Informer 2 answered that “UNHCR can share data with OPM and partner organizations but just if necessary and minimal information”. The information described as “necessary and minimal” not only concerns all the biodata previously collected; among the data that needs to be shared in order to guarantee the protection implementation by UNHCR’s partner NGOs there are protection needs as the nature of the violence the PoC suffered, the executor of the abuse, former address of the survivor and the new one, in case she or he would have been moved to a protection house. All this information are surely “necessary” in order to allow UNHCR’s protection implementing partner to properly assist the PoC however, what is considered to be “wrong” by the analysis of the data collection, is to consider these information as “minimal” since the nature of the data and the potential consequences that these information could concern in the wrong hands.

Data sharing policies are surely a key topic in the “Policy of the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR” and, due to the sensitive nature of the persons of concern UNHCR protects and the damages biometric data could cause in the wrong hands, the policy document being here analysed dedicate an entire section to data-sharing policies with partners and third parties (UNHCR, 2015, pp. 30-40). The “third party” category UNHCR can potentially share data with are “national governments, international governmental or non-governmental organizations, private sector entities or individuals”. This is an even more sensitive topic because often, even governments from low-income countries, “can acquire [such] tools relatively cheaply and use them to spy on humanitarians and people of concern alike: stealing their data, mapping their networks and manipulating their activities” (Sandvik, 2015). Openly sharing biometric data with entities, such as governments that have nothing to do with the Ugandan refugee response, often represents a cyber-security threat to UNHCR and its PoCs. During the qualitative data collection on the field, informer 1 from Kyaka, as well as number 3 from the UNHCR Kampala country office, mentioned that OPM and implementing partners are the only actors UNHCR could share the data with, not being aware of the “third party” section mentioned on the “Policy of the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR”. This seems to show a limited understanding of data sharing policies from UNHCR personnel on the field and at the country office that inevitably decreases the registration personnel’s risk perception of these policies. What is particularly concerning is the fact that the analysed policy document states that “governments” are among the possible actors that could access refugees’ data but it does not explain whether this refers to host governments, the governments refugees are fleeing from or governments that seek to avoid to receive refugees in the future thus keen to acquire data in support of their anti-migration theories. On one hand UNHCR could share data with foreign countries as USA, UK or the European Union in order to document with reliable data the numbers of refugees that Uganda is hosting, in order to acquire funds destined to increase the quality of the services supporting these refugees. On the other hand, it is equally true that these data could serve as basis for a foreign country’s

analysis aimed to understand whether large refugee influxes could have a positive or negative impact on a country, thus influencing the migration policies of that country according to the results of the analysis. In both cases this leads to serious ethical implications. Specifically, if a country is keen to host refugees, it must be for humanitarian reasons rather than for an economic profit. The fact that the “Policy of the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR” does not precisely specify with whom the data are shared and the purpose of the data sharing is considered here as a weakness of the document. Moreover, it can expose refugees’ data to the threat of illicit appropriation by entities, as the foreign governments refugees are fleeing from.

### **4.3.2 UNHCR data protection policies**

UNHCR is at the forefront of the refugee response. This makes it necessary for UNHCR to have reliable data about the people they serve but at the same time is responsible for the protection of the data from misuse and function creep, not only internally but also among its partner organizations and third parties.

The “Policy of the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR” states that the partner organizations UNHCR is sharing the data with, must comply with the basic principles of this policy. UNHCR must therefore address whether an implementing partner has the capacity to guarantee satisfactory data protection standards or, if necessary, UNHCR needs to support “building or enhancing their capacity in order to comply with the data protection standards and principles contained in this Policy” (UNHCR, 2015, p. 33). This can be certainly seen as necessary precautionary measure to guarantee a certain degree of data-security for some among the most vulnerable persons in the world. UNHCR is not new in providing means and trainings in support to smaller partner NGOs. As noted in Rhino Camp, OPM is the material executor of the biometric registration of newcomers, while UNHCR provides the necessary technologies for the registration such as computers, iris and fingerprint scans but also trainings for the case workers registering refugees (Informer 1, 2, 3, 2020). As UNHCR does for biometric registration and in many other circumstances, it is supposed to provide such support also for implementing partners concerning data protection policies. The analysis below will investigate whether this support can be considered enough to guarantee cyber-security for PoCs’ data.

Despite being recognized as the most important agency protecting refugees worldwide, adopting the highest standard of cyber-security, UNHCR is not immune to cyber-attacks itself (Parker, 2020). UN agencies have a long history of cyber-attacks received, some of which have been successful and some not. What emerged as a trend is the tendency to cover up these attacks (Informer 3, 2020) in order not to undermine the credibility of the agency, to alarm employees and PoCs whose data are stored and to make the public opinion aware of any eventual cyber-security breach (Sandvik, 2015). However, omitting to report a cyber-attack is a violation of this policy document as “UNHCR personnel are required to notify the data controller as soon as possible upon becoming aware of a personal data breach and to properly record the breach” (UNHCR, 2015, p. 28). At the same time and in apparent contradiction with what stated above, UN agencies are not “obliged to divulge what was obtained by the hackers or notify those affected” being the UN under diplomatic immunity (Parker, 2020). In mid-July 2019 the UN offices in Geneva and Vienna suffered a cyber-attack from a group of hackers but this had been concealed until an investigation by The New Humanitarian. The same UN employees who suffered the attack were not notified at first about the breach. The attack compromised staff records, health insurances and commercial contracts but it is still not clear whether these are the only areas affected or if the breach was bigger than what reported by the UN officials

(Parker, 2020). What is known is that the hackers got access to dozens of UN servers and that a senior IT official described the breach as a “major meltdown” (Parker, 2020). The discrepancy is concerning especially when looking at the “accountability and supervision” section of the analyzed document, which states that the Data Protection Officers at UNHCR HQ in Geneva are responsible for “Maintaining inventories of information provided by data controllers and data protection focal points, including data transfer agreements, specific instances of data sharing by UNHCR with third parties, data protection impact assessments, data breach notifications and complaints by data subjects” (UNHCR, 2015). This means that sensitive information about refugees were in fact stored among the potential profiles that had been violated (Parker, 2020).

During the qualitative data collection conducted in Rhino Camp it has been difficult to retrieve information on this matter. This might be because it is a highly technical topic that personnel on the field might not have had a training about, which would constitute a finding per se; or it might be due to the fact that these aspects are rather HQ material than for settlement offices. The absence of meaningful answers about data protection policies is an aspect that is still worth analyzing because of the simplicity of the question asked on the field. At the question “Have you ever heard of a leak of refugee data due hackers’ actions, pressure from governmental institution or private companies?” the answer received in Rhino Camp has been a quick and bare “No” (Informer 2, 2020). The question was clearly aimed to receive some insights about any event that had not been covered by the press but the absolute ignorance about any of the cyber-attack that UNHCR or other UN agencies suffered recently says a lot about the awareness that these field workers have on this sensitive topic. Furthermore, when the same informer was requested about the adequacy of UNHCR data protection policies he seemed really convinced that UNHCR is actually doing its best even though when asked “how does UNHCR protect refugee’s data?” he answered: “UNHCR protects refugee’s data giving access to database only to few people authorized” (Informer 2, 2020). This cannot be considered a satisfactory measure in order to adequately protect such delicate source of data, nor it shows preparedness on the topic by the UNHCR informer 2. This could be because the interviewee was not aware of the number of UNHCR professionals that have access to these data and the actual aspects that UNHCR officers in Geneva need to take care of, as stated by the “accountability and supervision” section of the document under analysis. The answer to the same question by the informer number 3 in Kampala differed from the one by the informer 2. The officer interviewed at UNHCR country office considers that refugees’ data are in fact adequately protected and he supported his opinion listing the same measures listed in the UNHCR policy document under analysis but at the same time pointing out the cyber-attacks UNHCR suffered recently (Informer 3, 2020).

Even though the UN is a well-established global institution, it is still very vulnerable to cyber-attacks. These in turn can affect smaller organizations to a larger extent, putting at risks PoCs data that UNHCR is sharing with implementing partners. Despite the efforts UNHCR puts in place to make partner organizations compliant with the “Policy of the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR”, UNHCR itself does not seem to be complying with the “security of personal data” section of the policy document under review. Cyber-attacks are a threat that neither UNHCR nor implementing partners seem ready to face and this is an aspect to be taken into great consideration since the thesis at hand is seeking to understand positive and negative outcomes of biometric registration for refugees seeking protection in Uganda. The vulnerability to cyber-attack threatening the privacy and security of millions of UNHCR’s PoCs also affects all NGOs that are following the digital example of UNHCR, that sets the digital agenda for smaller entities. Both biometric registration - a technology aimed to make remote refugee management more efficient - and UNHCR way of sharing and storing data are exposing refugees to risks that the traditional field-based

humanitarian assistance would have not faced. In order to store data collected from Ugandan refugee settlements in three databases at settlement level, regional office and HQ, inevitably triple the risk that these databases could be violated and information stolen. Moreover, sharing the data with implementing partner is certainly necessary for programmatic reasons, as stated above, but at the same time is exposing the data to cyber-threats thus putting at risk family members, properties and addresses of people that have fled their own country in order to escape from violence of militias that could perpetuate the violence further if in possession of the right information.

At Ugandan settlement level there are several NGOs that still store data locally, on excel sheets and or even in hard (Informer 1, 2020). Whilst the advantages related to digital technologies are obvious, so are also the related risks. As both Duffield and Sandvik point out, “rather than uncritically embracing cyber-humanitarianism, humanitarian agencies need to understand exactly what they are buying into” (Sandvik, 2015). In light of this, the level of understanding of the interviewed UNHCR staff in the Ugandan settlements, on the risks that biometric registration concern does not conceive the idea that UNHCR personnel know what they are buying into. When asked about the cons related to biometric registration, UNHCR professionals were able to mention the great reliability on internet connection that this technology presents, the heaviness of the data (Informer 2, 2020) and the time-consuming nature of this process (Informer 3, 2020). These three weaknesses characterizing biometric registration are certainly aspects that need to be taken into account due to the fact that the internet connection in Ugandan refugee settlements emerged from the interviews as insufficient, hence it does not match with the features of biometric systems and is seen by UNHCR personnel as the major gap challenging the implementation of biometric registration. The combination of heavy data that need to be shared and the poor internet connection at settlement level often challenged and delayed registration exercises. During both field missions in Kyaka II and Rhino Camp, registration of refugees was in many circumstances delayed and postponed due low internet capacity that the system needs to share data globally as it is supposed to do (Annex 1, 2). In view of this it is necessary to observe that registration itself does not need any internet connection if the data are stored locally; the internet connection is needed in order to share the data, not to collect it. Registration exercises were delayed and often postponed in order to allow the immediate share of data between field, regional office and HQ, inevitably affecting crowds of refugees forced to spend entire days waiting and with no information on the rescheduling of the exercise and subsequent relocation (Annex 2). What emerged from the interviews as the main gaps of biometric registration is surely considered as an aspect that affect refugees in a negative way but, at the same time, is not even close to be considered as the main factor threatening refugees seeking protection in Uganda. Possible data breaches due to cyber-attacks, inadequate data protection protocols, function creep due to inappropriate data sharing practices, are among the range of arguable ethical dilemmas that this technology concerns. Moreover, the officer covering the most senior role among those interviewed did not hesitated in pointing out the ethical concerns related to the capture and use of these data (Informer 3, 2020). However, the fact that humanitarian workers only mentioned internet connection and the heaviness of data as major challenges shows an insufficient understanding of what the deployment of biometric registration actually means for one million and a half refugees under UNHCR protection in Uganda.

The new ways of sharing and storing data are examples of how humanitarian cyberspace is creating new sources of risks to those who gave up their data. As Sandvik argued, “Increasing reliance on ICT means that cyber insecurity has become a fundamental threat to humanitarian action; such threats entail both the ‘ill-understood behavior of systems, as well as barely understood vulnerabilities.” (Sandvik, 2015). Behaviours of systems and their vulnerabilities are certainly material for tech-specialized personnel but such a low field

understanding of possible threats directly generated by the agency that is supposed to protect those that are in fact put at risk should be the basis for an improvement of the registration process, rather than internet-related gaps. “The humanitarian cyberspace may transform humanitarian organisations into entities that threaten the privacy and physical security of people of concern (Sandvik, 2015) affecting the agency’s image at the eyes of beneficiaries and donors with possibly disastrous consequences at field level if hackers affiliated with armed-non-state actors would get to take advantage of data breaches exposing vital information that Sandvik reported as of primarily importance as project locations, distribution plans, travel itineraries, partners details, and more (Sandvik, 2015).

### **4.3.3 Rights of data subjects**

The last aspect of the policy document under analysis that needs to be investigated is the “Rights of data subjects” section and the reflection at Ugandan settlement level. The “Policy of the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR” clearly states the purpose of the data collection, rights and services that PoCs can benefit from prior and after the registration procedure.

As stated by the policy document under analysis, before UNHCR’s biometric data collection the asylum seekers need to know from the reception center personnel the purpose of the data collection and the one of the data analysis, whether the data will be transferred to implementing partners or third parties. Moreover, before relocation, refugees are made aware of the importance of keeping UNHCR updated about any personal change, consequences for refusing to provide certain information, the beneficiaries’ right to request modification or deletion of the data and the right to object to the data collection (UNHCR, 2015). Based on the filed notes (Annex 2) derived from participatory observation, and qualitative data collection (Informer 2, 3, 2020) with UNHCR officials, there are discrepancies between the the information pack that refugees are supposed to receive on UNHCR biometric data collection and what stated in the policy document. The OCEA reception center of Rhino Camp is managed by the INGO Danish Refugee Council (DRC), through which the chance to speak with the reception center manager allowed this analysis to dispose of qualitative data on the whole process that a refugee needs to go through with a specific focus on the information pack that refugees receive upon arrival. What the reception personnel communicate to newcomers are information about the center facility (e.g. location of shelters, latrines, etc.), the general rules of the center, information about the NFIs pack they will receive at the moment of relocation and a quick introduction about the registration process. Among the info related to the registration process, the reception center personnel explain the three stages of registration, when and how the registration will take place and what will happen there after (Annex 2). However, when interviewing the informer number 2, it emerged that refugees do not receive any kind of information from the OPM case worker at the moment of biometric registration (Informer 2, 3, 2020). OPM asks for the consent to collect and share information and, in case a household has a problem with the data collection, it will be solved by making the family aware of the consequences of refusing to give up the data, and namely not being recognized as refugees, which in turn means not receiving any humanitarian assistance nor protection (Informer 2, 2020). From both sources of data, it seems clear that what affirmed by the “Policy of the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR” does not practically happen in Ugandan refugee settlements. What is communicated to refugees has nothing to do with the purpose of the biometric data collection nor the sharing of data with partner organizations or third parties. UNHCR and OPM simply ask refugee for the consent to collect and share the data, and, once refugees give them the consent, UNHCR has the right to share

these data with very little restrictions. The only information that matches in both interviews and policy document are the consequences related to refusing to give UNHCR the necessary data, which clearly shows the power relation inside the registration room (Informer 2, 2020). The policy document under analysis touches upon this specific aspect once more stating that refugees have the right to object to the processing of personal data but, at the same time, UNHCR has the right to “refuse to provide a response or limit or restrict its response to a request or objection” based on the following circumstances. “It would constitute a necessary and proportionate measure to safeguard or ensure one or more of the following: the safety and security of UNHCR, its personnel or the personnel of Implementing Partners; or the overriding operational needs and priorities of UNHCR in pursuing its mandate. There are grounds for believing that the request is manifestly abusive, fraudulent or obstructive to the purpose of processing.” (UNHCR, 2015).

There are numerous challenges related to the information that refugees need to communicate to UNHCR in order to keep their refugee profiles updated. As explained above, Ugandan refugee settlements are stretched across immense areas making it very difficult for UNHCR personnel to reach them once the refugees are relocated and literally impossible for refugees to reach UNHCR in order to communicate such personal or household changes. Therefore, communications between refugees and humanitarian agencies after registration and relocation are extremely limited and it is not feasible for UNHCR professionals to reach out to all beneficiaries to retrieve further data from them, nor to do this via phone as the majority of refugees has no personal phone and the communication network does not allow it. On the other hand, refugees generally cannot afford to take moto-taxis to reach UNHCR office to communicate eventual wrong information collected or to request for a change of their personal status. Based on the above, it seems reasonable to point out that the list of rights mentioned at first are in contradiction with what was just referenced: refugees can benefit from a wide range of rights as far as these are not clashing with UNHCR’s programmatic agenda, NGO’s overwhelming workload or logistic and communication challenges.

#### **4.3.4 Registration location for refugees seeking protection in Uganda**

The second document under analysis below is the “UNHCR Handbook for Registration, Procedures and Standards for Registration, Population Data Management and Documentation”. This is a detail handbook where different stakeholders deploying or assisting in registration exercises “can find detailed and accessible information on how to set up registration activities, what data should be collected, and how to manage and protect the information gathered” (UNHCR, 2003). The registration process that refugees undergo at the various reception centres across Uganda will be the first aspect analysed in this chapter. This is aimed to set the general context in which refugees need to move their first steps and to later discuss the detailed outcomes of the policies analysed.

The location where registrations exercises take place will be the first aspect under analysis with the aim to highlight how UNHCR sets its standard at a very high level on the policy documents even though at field level there are not means and conditions to respect those standards. In the “UNHCR Handbook for Registration” the UN refugee agency sets a number of standards that the site aimed to host the registration exercise should take into consideration. These standards concern aspects that the hosting facilities need to respect such as: enough space to accommodate personnel and refugees, presence of common waiting areas as well as specific areas for women and children and for “special cases” in need of privacy; the location needs to be accessible for both refugees and personnel, security and crowd control, electricity, air conditioning, water and toilets. However only a few of the above characteristics could be found

in the Ugandan refugee settlements visited (Annex 2), which is probably because some of these are not a priority in such difficult and underfunded circumstances, or because of the remote locations where the vast majority of these facilities are located. At the time of the field mission OCEA reception centre in Rhino Camp was hosting 1800 refugees even though the standard capacity was set at 600 (Annex 2). This does not only mean that there cannot be enough space to accommodate all refugees waiting for registration, but also that other features of the reception centre are not adequate to host that many asylum seekers and all existing gaps were exacerbated by the overpopulation. In fact, as a result of the gap analysis, it emerged that OCEA reception centre suffered of lack of latrines and shelters, cleaners were understaffed and thus latrines and shelters were not adequately clean to guarantee sufficient standard of hygiene. Moreover, there were no specific common areas for women or children and “special cases” were brought from the protection team under the shadow of trees in order to discuss their cases, so no real isolation for privacy was observed. When OPM personnel were taking care of the crowd control of the asylum seekers queuing for the interview, the situation always appeared to be under control even though the entire facility was protected by two private security guards and one single police officer. Electricity from a generator was used by humanitarian workers only, air conditioning was not available and water access in West Nile has always been a major challenge that still needs to be solved (Annex 2). While some of the above features that a registration site should have but that in fact do not find confirmation on the field can be seen as minor gaps, some others can lead to serious exposure to risks that are linked to the biometric registration under analysis. Back in December 2019, when the field mission took place, the hygiene conditions of OCEA were already worrying the humanitarian staff working at the reception centre. This included poor cleaning of shelters and maintenance of latrines which could easily lead to serious diseases’ outbreaks, even when COVID-19 was not yet a threat. Not disposing of women and child friendly spaces can put the whole OCEA population at risk of wildfires due to a lack of adequate spots where women can cook safely and children can play far from the continues movements of humanitarian cars and trucks (Annex 2). As noted above, the gaps that OCEA reception centre showed are most likely common to many other similar facilities in country and over the Ugandan borders. The standards set out by UNHCR can be seen as sufficient in order to guarantee safety and protection of PoCs. Unfortunately, there are several potential reasons that could lead to not respect these standards at field level and this is exactly what was observed at OCEA. Safety and protection would have been guaranteed if the 600 people capacity would have been respected but in such large and complex operations not everything goes as planned, and unexpected large influxes of newcomers can easily compromise all the standard set out by the “UNHCR Handbook for Registration”. This is also due to the fact that the budget prepared for 600 PoCs cannot be enough when hosting three times that number. Refugees are thus exposed to a number of risks even before the actual registration procedure begins.

The location where a registration facility should be built on emerged as a crucial aspect from both field missions in Kyaka II and Rhino Camp. The “UNHCR Handbook for Registration” says that, when choosing a site for registration, the designed location should take into consideration an accessible venue for refugees, in proximity of camps or refugee settlement (UNHCR, 2003, p. 123). Both reception centers in Kyaka II and Rhino Camp are located within the settlement, as stated by the UNHCR handbook but, in the case study is not enough as these are still located up to 50 km away from some zones and villages that compose the settlement. As explained below this is an essential aspect that directly affects both refugees and UNHCR operations. When interviewing humanitarian workers in Rhino Camp, it emerged that a key gap in the service provision in the settlement is represented by unregistered refugees, whereby a big portion is represented by unregistered children (Annex 2, Informer 2, 2020). These displaced populations often do not enter Uganda through the designated entry points at

the border with South Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo where UNHCR and OPM staff can set up movements from the entry point to the settlement following the procedure for registration and further relocation. What happens with unregistered refugees is that they self-resettle straight to the zones and villages of Rhino Camp following the advice of already registered and relocated refugees of their same tribe. Therefore, they do not pass through the reception center for registration and UNHCR cannot officially recognize them as refugees, in this way denying them humanitarian assistance they deserve. These refugees do not have access to NFIs, food and cash distributions, nor protection from *refoulement* or other sources of threat, inevitably putting their destiny at risk. The reasons behind this trends are known to UNHCR since in their handbook for registration they state that “Some groups, such as spontaneously settled refugees living outside of camps or in operations where there is no assistance component, may also stay away from registration because they may not perceive any benefits.” (UNHCR, 2003, p. 33). The qualitative data collected in Rhino Camp confirm what just affirmed by the UNHCR handbook, while the one in Kampala contradicts it. According to the informer 1, these people do not know that self-resettling their family without undergoing the registration process implies that they would never receive any kind of assistance. They simply follow the advice from members of the same tribe in order to live among the people they were living with in their home country. This aspect poses a difficult challenge for humanitarian agencies to solve, due to the fact that these asylum seekers often have no economic mean to go to the reception center for registration. Neither UNHCR nor OPM dispose of timely resources to register refugees that are not new arrivals because they are already overwhelmed with the refugees waiting for registration at the reception center (Informer 2, 2020). From the data collected by the informer 3, based in Kampala, emerged that “Mobile registration activities are undertaken in case of backlogs especially for birth registration for settlements that are receiving new arrivals. Exceptional arrangements are made to register unregistered asylum seekers who may approach non-receiving settlements mainly in West Nile.” (Informer 3, 2020), this shows how the understanding of humanitarian workers on the field and at the country office differ and how the standard procedure often times in not possible to be implemented on the field. At the same time, it is difficult to argue that the OCEA reception center does not respect the “location” standard set out by the UNHCR handbook for registration. This is because, in Rhino Camp, a place accessible for all refugees in the settlement does not exist due to the immense area it covers. This thesis agrees in its outcomes with Sandvik’s humanitarian cyberspace theory, as the Ugandan context, can give an explanation to the unregistered refugees gap through the increasing deployment of ICT as a mean of assisting refugees rather than the traditional field-based work (Sandvik, 2015). If refugees have no way to get themselves registered because too far from the registration facility, they are exposed to a wide range of risks while at the same time they cannot benefit from UNHCR protection services. Furthermore, this trend is also affecting UNHCR operation since all the data that they dispose are not entirely reliable as it does not take into consideration thousands of potential refugees, who UNHCR is not officially aware of. This in turn, inevitably affects the programmatic outcomes of UNHCR operations while hitting refugees even at a greater scale.

#### **4.3.5 Information required during registration process**

The next aspect to be analyzed are the guidelines on the information that needs to be collected from refugees during the registration process in Ugandan refugee settlements. This is done in order to understand what process a refugee seeking protection in Uganda has to follow in order to receive humanitarian assistance.



The process refugees need to face prior to relocation aims primarily at proving the identity of PoCs seeking protection granted by UNHCR and OPM, to merge their biodata with the biometrics and lastly to link each registered household to a specific address, with the purpose to know where each household is relocated in case an intervention would be needed. This inevitably exposes the security of refugees to risks, in case these data would end up in the wrong hands. At the end of the registration exercise and relocation, UNHCR knows exactly how many households have been “received” over time, their composition and their geographical settlement location in order to be able to reach them on the field whenever an intervention is necessary. As stated by the policy document under analysis: “Linking refugee data to where refugees reside means that UNHCR and partners can find people whenever an assistance or protection intervention is required” (UNHCR, 2003, p. 116). The approach pursued by UNHCR globally and OPM locally can be analyzed through Foucault’s biopower theory as a population management tool (Sokhi-Bulley, 2014). Specifically, through the governmentality lens, UNHCR substitute the actor of governance as manager and refugees become the subject of said management (Foucault, 1977-1978). The power relation between UNHCR and PoCs is typical of the Foucauldian view of governments and population. This is motivated by the unequal rights and duties that UNHCR and refugees can benefit from and need to respect. More specifically, UNHCR has the right to collect information and to verify them through a wide range of tools below explained; refugees on the other hand must give up a big portion of their rights and privacy in order to receive humanitarian assistance (Informer 1, 2, 3, 2020). This is because, as proved by the interviews with UNHCR registration personnel, if any refugee would refuse to give UNHCR and OPM their bio and biometric data, they would not be considered refugees thus they would not be able to stay in the Ugandan territory and they could not be recipient of humanitarian aid nor be controlled subject by non-governmental and governmental actors as argued below (Shoemaker et al., 2019).

Some of the information UNHCR and OPM demand from displaced population aim to “improve the lives of refugees” (UNHCR, 2003, p. 85). The majority of refugees seeking protection in Uganda have never had any identity document or proof of nationality, hence UNHCR provides them with a document reporting name, sex, country of origin and date of birth. This procedure has a double goal and namely providing UNHCR with reliable information about the numbers and composition of the populations they serve on one hand and providing refugees with an official identity on the other (Informer 1, 2, 3, 2020). Some other information collected by UNHCR and OPM have a protection component that aims at granting refugee’s protection assistance for specific individual needs. An example would be collecting information on religion and ethnic group membership refugees identify themselves with. Whilst this apparently seems a type of data aimed at controlling the population often based on prejudices that picture certain ethnicities and religious as more difficult to control than others, it is instead a very relevant feature to be known in order to deploy a resettlement plan that takes into consideration religious and ethnic factors that might have caused violence and forced people to flee from their country of origin. This is applied for example in Rhino Camp where, according to what emerged from an interview with the informer 2 at the OCEA, it is necessary to divide the population who experienced conflict in the country of origin and specifically between the groups of Dinkas and Nuer, that caused violent conflicts both in South Sudan and in Ugandan refugee settlements before.

Despite the evident programmatic reasons behind the need of reliable data to plan and implement an effective refugee response (UNHCR, n/d, 1) it is not as easy on the other hand to justify the need of personal, detailed and sensitive sources of data for the effective protection of UNHCR’s PoCs. As previously stated, it is more challenging to justify the collection of data for service and protection purposes when collecting information about the level of education, occupational skills and, especially, ownership of properties. According to the qualitative data

collection conducted at settlement level, data on the level of education and occupational skills can be used as a programmatic source of data to help humanitarian agencies in programming educational and livelihood plans and priorities, even though the vast majority of refugees has never been to school and has mostly lived as agro-pastoralists (Informer 3, 2020). A possible explanation of the request for such sources of data is what Foucault conceptualized as “the problem of governments”, where populations are seen as bare productive power, and biopower was and still is the tool intended to exercise control over the population (Foucault, 1977-1978). Foucault’s theoretical lenses can support this analysis further providing an alternative explanation to the need of such data by UNHCR and OPM. Refugees seeking protection in Uganda are encouraged by both UNHCR and OPM to “help themselves” using the NFIs pack in order to develop self-reliance activities and support their families and the development of the country hosting them. Even though Foucault never dealt with refugee-related topics, his view of population as productive power might justify the necessity of data as education and occupational skills in order to allow OPM to analyze if and how the displaced population could contribute to the development of Uganda and to put in place production systems accordingly. Furthermore, these data and studies on the Ugandan refugee strategy could serve to foreign countries as analytical basis to decide whether migration flows have a positive or negative outcome on the host state. This could also have an influence on the domestic strategy with regards to the acceptance of refugees should the positive advantage be proven, or to push back operations on the other hand. Despite the possible programmatic reasons mentioned above, the whole bio-data set that UNHCR and OPM demand from refugees, can be read through what Foucault described as tools to manage population in “The History of Sexuality Volume I”: “propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary. Their supervision was effected through an entire series of interventions and regulatory controls: a biopolitics of the population.” (Foucault, 1976). Through the data demanded by UNHCR and OPM, all the components mentioned by Foucault are part of the data collected or possible to be calculated in the long run. As will be analyzed below, newborns need to be reported to UNHCR as well as casualties or any change in the household composition. With these data it is possible to calculate life expectancy and longevity. Furthermore, disposing of such data, makes it possible to set up action plans (e.g. construction of safe havens for SGBV survivors, child friendly spaces, etc.) in order to have a certain outcome on the population (e.g. the reduction of infant mortality rate, increasing of longevity, etc.). All these data and studies on the outcomes of different population management strategies are integrated to the humanitarian data infrastructure, with the chance to be reviewed from foreign countries that present similar population issues or that are facing migration influxes. In this regard it seems clear that refugees are left with little to no room for decision making, especially if they “want” to be protected and assisted; in order to receive materials to build a shelter, food rations or cash, they are bound to give UNHCR and OPM the data they need. Furthermore, the handbook pushes the line of control further by considering telephone numbers as another information that need to be linked with the “control sheet” document, even though just in urban settings (UNHCR, 2003, p. 116).

All these data inevitably shape refugee lives in Ugandan refugee settlements. The “control sheet” with all the data of different households members and representatives is fundamental for refugees as it grants them a wide range of services and, specifically, is necessary to receive non-food-items (NFIs), such as the means to build a shelter, to cook and to retrieve fire wood (Informer 3, 2020) (Annex 2). The bio and biometric data collected during registration are also linked to the World Food Programme (WFP) ration cards. These ration cards are necessary for refugees in order to get access to food and cash distributions. Given that food and cash are essential services for refugees, these distributions are attended by all refugee households of the area and thus WFP, UNHCR, and OPM have a clear idea of those

that get access to these services, thanks to the collected biometric data set and the biometric verification that every refugee who takes part in food distribution needs to undergo, thus leaving behind “traces”, which can be analyzed later on. The traces that refugees leave behind at every food and cash distribution give humanitarian and governmental agencies information on the amount of households living in a certain area and, if a household does not attend a distribution, this also gives to the same agencies a necessary hint about possible relocation of the household to another area. This in turns translates into the possibility for the agency to act accordingly with strategies of remote control that allow different stakeholders to “put life in order” (Foucault, 1976, p. 139)

#### **4.3.6 Refugee records management and updates**

The importance of record management and updates of refugees’ data have been stressed multiple times throughout the UNHCR handbook for registration. “Continuous population data management is based on the principle of using existing data as a baseline. Refugee records should be continuously updated, validated and built upon while preserving the integrity of the master record. Registration records should reflect any changes in the status of the refugee and/or his or her entitlements” (UNHCR, 2003, p. 147). This shows how reliable data on the PoCs they serve, are fundamental for UNHCR both at the time of the first data collection as well as to keep those data updated over time. The second annex of the handbook for registration clearly states that 12 months is the minimum standard amount to keep registration records verified and updated (UNHCR, 2003, pp. 3, 6-7), the informer number 3 on the other hand stated as every three years the minimum standard for mass verification exercises (Informer 3, 2020). These updates should include births and deaths at household level but also marriages and divorces, changes of address and/or household composition. Refugees are therefore supposed to communicate all this information to UNHCR and OPM, while “Record updates are performed on a weekly basis by OPM registration teams that rotate between different zones in settlements.” (Informer 3, 2020). In this regard it is important to go back to the “unregistered refugee trend” mentioned above because the field reality heavily clashes with the policies analyzed. In the “Policy of the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR”, UNHCR states that is a refugee’s duty to keep UNHCR informed about changes to their personal or family situation (UNHCR, 2015, p. 19). In the “UNHCR Handbook for Registration, Procedures and Standards for Registration, Population Data Management and Documentation” it has been stressed multiple times the importance to communicate these changes to UNHCR. This is often simply impossible due to the fact that, once again, the humanitarian assistance that refugees receive in cash does not reach 10 dollars per month per family (roughly 40.000 Ugandan Shillings) and the cost of the journey from many zones of the settlement to the UNHCR office where personal changes are supposed to be reported often exceed the 80 thousands Ugandan shillings (Informer 1, 2020). According to what the UNHCR documents state, refugee families should invest two months of cash assistance in order to communicate a death, a new born, a marriage or a divorce to UNHCR because, according to what emerged from the informer 2, UNHCR does not have the necessary personnel, resources and time to reach the settlements to register unregistered self-resettle refugee’s households nor verify or update information previously collected from registered refugees at the reception center. This lack of UNHCR’s capacity to fulfil the standards set out inevitably puts at risk unregistered refugees that are left alone in the villages as well as the baseline of reliable data that UNHCR needs in order to adequately plan their operations. Informer 3 does not share the same opinion on this last aspect, once again confirming the different perception of the field reality by humanitarian workers on the field and at country office.

The reliability of the data collected during the initial registration process is only guaranteed if the baseline of data is supported by continuous updates of the individual and household data over time. As stated by the policy document under analysis: “Statistics represent an important tool both in the field and at Headquarters. Accurate and up-to-date statistics on the populations of concern to UNHCR are required for planning, monitoring, and evaluation purposes, for reporting to UNHCR’s Executive Committee and ECOSOC, and for UN common-system information needs. When consistently recorded and developed, they provide an important yardstick for tracking progress against objectives and for identifying changes in numbers, practices and behaviors” (UNHCR, 2003, p. 39). The above statement is considered relevant for this research as it touches upon monitoring and behavioral components reported between the lines. Whilst the control nature of some of the data and policies that UNHCR and OPM are pursuing on bio and biometric data has already been analyzed in the paragraphs above through some similarities with Foucault’s biopower theory as population management tool, this latest statement can be used to argue that UNHCR intends to convert refugee’s up to date bio and biometric data in statistics able to “identifying changes in (numbers), practices and behaviors”. Foucault’s biopower can also be applied to this practice and behavioral aspects UNHCR intends to monitor. Specifically, as argued by Foucault in his studies, biopower is intended as “intervention and regulatory controls” based on human behaviors and habits (Taylor, 2011). As a result, UNHCR and OPM’s efforts in retrieving bio and biometric data, keeping them up to date and reliable seem reasonable to reconduct it to the goal of a knowledge production that would allow humanitarian and governmental agencies to dispose of information about the refugees they have to maintain under control. Lastly, there is yet another tool that UNHCR and OPM use in order to verify and update refugee’s data.

#### **4.3.7 UNHCR’s home visits**

The next aspect found relevant for the policy analysis is the way UNHCR set the “standards that correspond to the validation of registration information and the identification of persons of concern”. In order to verify and eventually correct and update the data retrieved during the registration exercise, UNHCR is allowed to conduct home visits to verify “actual place of residence and family/household composition” (UNHCR, 2003) (Annex 2, p. 8).

From the observations on the field and interviews with humanitarians working in the refugee settlement in Kyaka II and Rhino Camp, splitting the refugee family into two separate households (in order to benefit from additional NFIs distributions for selling purposes) was reported as a trend (Informer 1, 2, 2020). This is among the reasons that led UNHCR to utilize home visits as a tool to confirm and eventually update refugee households’ data. Whilst this tool is also supposedly used to reduce UNHCR expenses per household, it also raises questions on the control and managerial nature of such policy.

At village level in Ugandan refugee settlements, the presence of humanitarian workers is minimum, all NGOs and UN agencies have their offices at basecamp and professionals are sent to the outer villages only for specific home visits for individual protection case management or for food or cash distribution exercises (Informer 1, 2020) (Annex 2). The decreasing presence of humanitarian workers on the field and the increasing reliance on net-based technologies of remote management are aspects that have been object of analysis by Duffield under the lens of cyber humanitarianism. This cyber humanitarian practice of creating a space between UNHCR’s workers and the people they serve creates the necessary circumstances for the data collection UNHCR and OPM are undertaking, but it does not necessarily prove the cost-efficiency of the UN funding. The villages where refugees are relocated in are very often in remote locations, only reachable by hours of driving in very poor

road conditions. To bring humanitarian workers from the base camp to the village, enabling them to verify household addresses and household composition are often extremely expensive operations. Even if discrepancies about the information retrieved during registration are detected during these house visits, it is an extremely costly operation in terms of logistics (e.g. fuel, car maintenance and time-efficiency). A field-based approach where humanitarian workers would work at village level on a daily base would be more cost-effective since these professionals could detect household anomalies while being already in the village rather than relying on remote management, which is the core of cyber-humanitarianism.

The previous paragraphs highlighted the relevant aspects of not only the conditions necessary for refugees to receive humanitarian assistance but also of what UNHCR and OPM demand from them and the effort those agencies put in place to retrieve reliable data and how to keep them as such through continuous updates and verification exercises. The next chapter will link the problematic findings emerged from the policy analysis, data collection and field notes, with the existing literature about the Ugandan biometric registration deployment.

#### 4.4 Desk review

The previous subchapter has been focused on crosschecking what the two milestone documents chosen for the policy analysis stated in terms of registration process, protection of refugee's data, data sharing policies, rights of refugee undergoing biometric registration, refugee records management and updates with the field-reality coming from interviews with humanitarian professionals working in the Ugandan settlements. The analysis showed a wide range of policies aimed to safeguard refugees and their data during and after biometric registration. At the same time, based on the empirical experience on the field, several discrepancies have been pointed out about some procedures that seem to be official on paper but difficult to implement in practice.

This last subchapter of the analysis will merge the findings proposed through the policy analysis, interviews and field notes about the problematic aspects emerged from the Ugandan Refugee settlements about biometric registration, with the existing literature on this regard. There are several gaps and challenges that emerged from both field missions in the Ugandan settlements and from the literature composing this subchapter. The coherence between the different sources of data will be analysed, as well as other aspects that have been pointed out only in one of the two sources of data. Based on the above, there are several problematic aspects, gaps and challenges when taking into consideration biometric registration for refugees. These aspects can be summarized in the following macro topics.

There are many ethical issues related with biometric registration that emerged as problematic through the analysis at hand and the existing literature. Anna Lodinova', from the Development, Environment and Foresight Journal, reported three main areas of concern raised by biometric registration. *Informational privacy* constitutes one of these areas and refers to potential function creep vulnerabilities that characterize this technology when sharing refugees' data (Lodinova, 2016) and it finds confirmation with the ethical concerns pointed out by informer 1 and 3. This specific aspect emerged as a big gap in the biometric deployment exercise at first when analysing the UNHCR policies of data sharing, especially with the "third party" category, that could possibly put refugees' data at risk of being shared with states for reasons that are not considerable essential for UNHCR programmes and that often can represent a potential weapon of authoritarian governments (Lodinova, 2016). On top of that, another research that explored refugees' opinion about data sharing policies and informational privacy, found out that refugees are worried about some of the information that they must share with UNHCR because they are seen as a threat of "future political persecution or immigration

problems” (Shoemaker et al., 2019). In relation to this, another aspect has been mentioned as critical, and namely the unequal power relation that characterize refugees and the managers of their data that can be seen also from Lodinova’s paper: “Biometrics will be used at UNHCR’s discretion. Whether or not the UNHCR exchanges data with partners is not relevant.” (Jacobsen, 2016 - Lodinova, 2016). This gives a picture of the different room for decision making that characterize UNHCR’s and refugees’ agency.

The second ethical issue that Lodinova points out concerns the *physical privacy* of the data subjects, and the “de-humanizing” connotation that the biometric technology shows. “It has been argued that the collection, analysis and storage of such innate and personal data is de-humanizing” as it reduces the individual, the human being, to a number” (Lodinova, 2016). This is a serious ethical issue that set its roots deeper in the conceptualization of refugees often defined, also in official UNHCR policy documents, as “data subjects”, “beneficiaries” or with acronyms as PoCs or PSNs, stressing their critical status rather than what identifies them as human beings. In addition to the informational and physical privacy mentioned above, it is relevant to mention that all refugees in Uganda settlements also have to sacrifice their personal privacy. Ugandan refugee settlements are not common refugee camps: they are not necessarily seen by beneficiaries as a temporary solution and, many households move to Uganda because it is known that Uganda, up to now, is willing to host and protect them in the mid-long term. Being Uganda the home of refugees since decades, it is understandable that refugee families would look for normality in the settlements after having fled their home country. Unfortunately, this normality is difficult to achieve if refugees should expect UNHCR or OPM at the door of their shelter with the aim of discovering lies or discrepancies generated by the initial data collection analysis. The effective reasons behind some of the information required by UNHCR have already been analysed above and, despite these programmatic reasons, this analysis argues that forcing people to sacrifice personal privacy for years and years of stay in Uganda is not a sustainable nor fair decision.

Another important aspect that needs to be taken into consideration when analysing the field implementation of biometric technology is represented by the low level of refugee’s awareness about the purpose of the biometric data collection that emerged from both UNHCR informers 2 and 3. As stated by a group of researchers that investigated refugees’ opinion about biometric technology: “Another major challenge that our analysis surfaced is how, from the refugees’ perspectives, existing identity systems suffer from a severe lack of transparency, including when their data is collected, updated, used, and shared. Many participants explained that, when asking detailed and intrusive personal questions during registration processes, representatives from various organizations (including the UNHCR) often did not explain why they needed all this information or how it would be used, despite humanitarian organizations commitment to ‘informed consent’” (Shoemaker et al., 2019). This statement perfectly reflects the findings of the policy analysis and the field data collection. On one hand, the “Policy of the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR” makes the UNHCR’s commitment official on making refugees aware about the reasons why UNHCR needs their data; on the other hand, UNHCR registration officers stated that refugees are not supposed to receive any information about the purpose of the data collection as they just have to give consent to share the bio and biometric data collected. The overcrowded conditions that reception centre officers need to work in can be certainly seen as the reason why it is often impossible to adequately communicate to refugees the reasons why they are undergoing such process but this is still a gap that need to be solved in order not to make refugees “confused, disappointed or anxious about the safety and privacy of their information (Shoemaker et al., 2019). Moreover, another potential explanation to read through the lack of refugees’ awareness that emerged during the data collection might be the lack of awareness that UNHCR field staff themselves have in this regard. The result of this is a one-direction flow of information directed

from refugees to UNHCR only, confirming the “power asymmetries [that] negatively impact refugees’ ability to exercise agency and control their personal information and identities” motioned above (Shoemaker et al., 2019).

According to the UNHCR Handbook for Registration, the ultimate goal of biometric registration is to “improve the lives of refugees” (UNHCR, 2003, p. 85). This differs from what emerged from the data collection as the main pros listed by UNHCR officials were more programmatic aspects such as the elimination of fraud rather than the humanitarian achievement of improving lives (Informer 2). In relation to this, the feeling that organizations might use refugees’ data in order to obtain funding without translating in to benefits for refugees was widespread among refugee settlement in Middle East and Uganda (Shoemaker et al., 2019). Biometric registrations have been defined as laborious and time-consuming by several sources (Informer 1, 3, 2020) (Shoemaker et al., 2019). Even though in Uganda no gaps have been detected that would delay the registration of refugees for several months, as reported by the Identity at the Margins researchers, biometric registration and its sub phases in Uganda are extremely demanding under different aspects nonetheless. Due to the overwhelming influx of asylum seekers, as mentioned above, it is often impossible to simultaneously take care of the new arrivals while fixing longstanding situations of unregistered refugees. The assumption is that a registration composed by fewer steps or with less biometric features to be captured would speed up the process in a way to make UNHCR capable of taking care of new arrivals as well as of those that are not being supported by UNHCR who are already in the settlement. Furthermore, being the process so time-consuming, it inevitably keeps humanitarian workers at the reception center rather than at village level, therefore making it impossible to fulfil the standards of verification and update refugees’ data set out by UNHCR itself. This ultimately, pose a challenge for both UNHCR programmatic agenda and especially the protection of PoCs.

## 5.0 Conclusion

This final chapter will present the findings and outcomes from the analysis on how the Ugandan biometric registration affects both UNHCR programmes and refugees, with a specific focus on the threats to which beneficiaries are exposed. The conclusions will be linked to each of the theoretical lenses employed, in order to demonstrate the nexus between the theoretical frameworks, the methodologies used to retrieve the data, and the findings generated from the combination of the two. The research question that the analysis tried to answer focused on one hand on the positive outcomes that biometric registration has on UNHCR and OPM operations and, on the other, on how biometric registration practices expose refugees to new types of threats. To this aim three theories have been employed to support the analysis.

The first theoretical lens used was the biopower theory. Biopower, which is a tool to manage the population (Sokhi-Bulley, 2014), has been applied to the Ugandan biometric registration context, whereby UNHCR and OPM have been conceptualized as managers of the refugee population, who instead represent the subject of such management. This proved useful to conceptualize the power relation and asymmetries between the refugee population seeking protection in Uganda as well as UNHCR and OPM. Cyber humanitarianism, the second theoretical lens, provided the means to conceptualize biometric registration as part of a tendency that Duffield described as “increasing reliance of remote and smart Net-based technologies in humanitarian management” (Duffield, 2013). The reason beyond this trend is the risk perception typical to many humanitarian-emergency contexts. However, as observed during the field missions, the risk factor is not really applicable to the Ugandan refugee settlements. The result of this risk perception has led humanitarians to work more and more from their securitized compounds rather than among zones and villages within the settlements.

On one hand, biometric registration emerged, throughout the analysis, as a by-product of this trend, as it is a technology that is able to provide humanitarian agencies with the data they need to implement programs minimizing field-threats. On the other hand, this technology can lead to an even stronger reliance on remote-control technologies rather than a field-based approach. The last theoretical lens that supported the analysis was the concept of humanitarian cyberspace and namely the increasing reliance on ICT as the mean through which humanitarian agencies “serve” refugees (Sandvik, 2015). This tendency is motivated by a “shrinking humanitarian space”, which is due to field-related threats but that, as previously argued, do not factually find representation in the visited Ugandan refugee settlements. As argued through this thesis, this shift is not justified by actual risks that humanitarian workers face on a daily base. On the contrary, the reliance that UNHCR and OPM have on biometric registration, rather than adopting a field-minded approach, constitute a threat itself to refugees.

These three theoretical frameworks have been merged throughout the analysis with different sources of data generated at both field and HQ level. A qualitative data collection has been conducted in two Ugandan refugee settlements (Kyaka II and Rhino Camp) targeting humanitarian officers working to biometrically register refugees in order to understand how these registration exercises help UNHCR and OPM in managing the Ugandan refugee response, as well as how these practices affect refugees prior and after registration. During the two field missions where the qualitative data collection was conducted, participatory observations and field notes have generated data able to investigate the field-outcomes of biometric registration. The data generated through these methodological approaches has been applied to undertake a policy analysis of two UNHCR policy documents describing standard practices and policies on the deployment of biometric registration worldwide. This has been done to understand which of these practices and standards take place on the field and which do not. The last method employed for the analysis was a desk review in which the findings generated from the previous subchapters were linked to the existing literature about Ugandan biometric registration in order to confirm the findings previously generated.

From the combination of the selected theoretical lenses and methodological approaches, a number of important findings emerged through the analysis. The data sharing practices that UNHCR describes in the “Policy of the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR” emerged as the first critical aspect. With whom and for which purpose UNHCR shares the data has been argued to be an aspect refugees are particularly worried about (Shoemaker et al., 2019). The shift from a face-to-face relation between humanitarian workers and beneficiaries, to a “face-to-screen” approach (motivated by the “increasing reliance on remote, net-based technologies in humanitarian management” (Duffield, 2013) and consequent data analysis at HQ level, can lead UNHCR to take strategic decisions based on refugees’ data only. This in turn means not taking into consideration the lack of empiric field-experience, which could mislead such decisions. From participatory observations and qualitative data collection, UNHCR registration officers seemed to have a low level of awareness about data sharing-related threats for refugees. Furthermore, the “third party” section of the above-mentioned policy document, is arguably lacking some key regulations. Specifically, the possibility to share refugees’ data with foreign governments and private sector entities could lead to the production of a body of knowledge that is potentially harmful for refugees. UNHCR data protection policies are also considered here as critical for the security of refugees in Ugandan settlements. UNHCR states that those entities with whom it is sharing data must comply with the minimum standard of cyber-security as set out by UNHCR itself. The challenge with this is that UNHCR historically suffered numerous cyber-attacks without being able to address such threats. Therefore, it seems clear that smaller partner organization are even less ready to face such threats either, inevitably putting refugees at risk. As mentioned above, refugees seeking protection in Uganda are often not aware of the purpose of the biometric data



collection and related policies of data sharing. At the same time the policy documents analysed state that such information needs to be transmitted to refugees in order not to face collective sabotage behaviours (UNHCR, 2003). This is particularly important when the data collection information is so extensive, sensitive and difficult to relate to a protection component. Even the registration location, an aspect that can seem of secondary importance, emerged as critical both for the refugees' life in the settlements and UNHCR operations. Several are the characteristics that a registration facility should have but that the Ugandan refugee settlements do not present. This aspect does not only put at risk refugees waiting for registration at the reception center but also makes it impossible for both refugees to fulfil the duties that UNHCR expect from them, and for UNHCR to fulfil its own. Due to the wide geographical space that the two refugee settlements under analysis cover, it seems almost impossible to find a perfect location for a registration facility. This makes it unrealistic for refugees to update UNHCR about their household information. Furthermore, it is extremely complicated and expensive to set up UNHCR verification exercises on the field and home visits. The result is that the final goal of biometric registration, i.e. to obtain reliable data on refugees settling in Uganda, remains difficult if not impossible to achieve in practice. Another critical aspect emerged from field notes and qualitative data collection relates to self-resettling asylum seekers, who are not officially recognized as refugees from UNHCR and OPM. Unregistered refugees are considered one of the main challenges for humanitarian operations in Ugandan settlements, as these are left out of the system, without protection nor humanitarian assistance. These refugees do not have any mean to physically reach the registration facilities and UNHCR has no time to reach them as it focuses on new arrivals. Lastly, UNHCR cannot implement mobile-registration operations – contrarily to what set out in its policy - because of the logistic challenges and the strong internet-reliability that this technology requires and that is highly hindered in the Ugandan context. The result of this is that numerous self-resettled children are left out of child protection programs and UNHCR does not have a clear picture of the number and composition of the refugee population on the field.

When looking at the research question “How does the deployment of biometric registration affect asylum seekers and UN operations in Uganda, and what are the risks that biometrically registered refugees are facing in Uganda because of UNHCR registration practices?” it is possible to argue that biometric registration has a great potential in providing UNHCR with reliable data, which is necessary for both programmatic and financial reasons, as well as to provide refugees with an identity and to reduce the level of fraud (Informer 1, 2, 3, 2020). However, the data-set that UNHCR demands from refugees seem to be exceeding the programmatic purposes and actually uncovers ethical concerns (Informer 1, 3, 2020). Specifically, refugees tend to appear as a subject to be controlled and studied. Biometric and bio data cannot and should not be the *conditio sine qua non* refugee receive humanitarian assistance. This is true especially if considering that they might genuinely worry about their safety as they are not being made aware of the purpose of the data collection. This conclusion argues that, whilst reliable data is crucial for UNHCR operations, modest incentives, such as NFIs, should be considered for the refugees that spontaneously give up their data and that all asylum seekers should receive basic humanitarian assistance if minimum necessary data are provided.

Moving forward, there remains numerous fields to be further regulated to guarantee the security of the refugees giving up their data in terms of cyber security and data sharing policies, as well as several discrepancies between the policy documents analyzed above and the field reality, and namely mobile verification exercises, information pack for refugees upon arrival and the standards for the registration location. There are also several ethically sensitive aspects that the registration process concerns (Informer 3, 2020), and namely religious and cultural objections (Informer 2, 2020), which should be subject to deeper analyses (Lodinova, 2016).

Finally, this thesis argues that the decreasing presence of humanitarian workers on the field that goes hand in hand with the deployment of biometric registration negatively influence UNHCR service provision, efficiency of operations and, most importantly, refugees. Both great potential and challenges characterize the biometric deployment for refugees in Uganda. Refugees receive humanitarian aid and protection services that are inevitably linked to their data collection hence at the same time they are exposed to risks that they are often not aware of. This thesis contributed to highlight and provide inputs on the several areas UNHCR needs to work on in order to reduce these threats, improve its service provision and increase the efficiency of its operations to the advantage of its beneficiaries.

## 6.0 Reference list

Adams, R. (2017). *Michael Foucault: Biopolitics and Biopower*. Critical Legal Thinking. Retrieved from: <http://criticallegalthinking.com/2017/05/10/michel-foucault-biopolitics-biopower/> [Accessed 10th May 2020]

Betts, A. (2009). *Forced Migration and Global Politics*. Malden, MA, USA: Wiley-Blackwell, p. 2

Biometric Institute, (n/d), 1. *Biometric Definition*. Retrieved from: <https://www.biometricsinstitute.org/what-is-biometrics/> [Accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2020]

Biometric Institute, (n/d), 2. *Types of Biometrics*. Retrieved from: <https://www.biometricsinstitute.org/what-is-biometrics/types-of-biometrics/> [Accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2020]

Biometric Institute, (n/d), 3. *FAQs*. Retrieved from <https://www.biometricsinstitute.org/what-is-biometrics/faqs/> [Accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2020]

Burt, C. (2018). *Uganda biometric refugee registration program faces scale and funding hurdles*. Retrieved from: [https://www.biometricupdate.com/201803/uganda-biometric-refugee-registration-program-faces-scale-and-funding-hurdles?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+biometricupdate+%28BiometricUpdate.com%29](https://www.biometricupdate.com/201803/uganda-biometric-refugee-registration-program-faces-scale-and-funding-hurdles?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+biometricupdate+%28BiometricUpdate.com%29) [Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> May 2020]

Duffield, M. (2013). *Disaster-Resilience in the Network Age Access-Denial and the Rise of Cyber-Humanitarianism*. DIIS Working Paper, 2013: 23.

Edwards, A. (2018). *Forced displacement at record 68.5 million*. Retrieved from: <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2018/6/5b222c494/forced-displacement-record-685-million.html> [Accessed 10th May 2020]

Foucault, M. (1976). *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality*, Volume 1. Penguin Books, London. pp. 139-140.

Foucault, M. (1977-1978). *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France*. St Martin's Press, New York City, United States.

Foucault, M. (2002). *The Subject and Power* in Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984. London: Penguin, p. 326, 341.47.

Informer 1, (2020). From ACTED Kyaka II.

Informer 2, (2020). From UNHCR Rhino Camp.

Informer 3, (2020). From UNHCR Kampala.

Jacobsen, K. L. (2010). *Making design safe for citizens: A hidden history of humanitarian experimentation*. Citizenship Studies, 14:1, 89-103, DOI: 10.1080/13621020903466399

Jacobsen, K. L. (2015). *Experimentation in humanitarian locations: UNHCR and biometric registration of Afghan refugees*. Copenhagen, Denmark: Metropolitan University College

Kessler, P. (2003). *Iris testing of returning Afghans passes 200,000 mark*. Retrieved from: <https://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2003/10/3f86b4784/iris-testing-returning-afghans-passes-200000-mark.html> [Accessed 14th March 2020]

Lodinova, A. (2016). *Application of biometrics as a means of refugee registration: focusing on UNHCR's strategy*. Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic: Development, Environment and Foresight, Vol. 2, No. 2

Lohne, K. & Sandvik, K. B. (2014). *The Rise of the Humanitarian Drone: Giving Content to an Emerging Concept*. Millennium: Journal of International Studies, SAGE Publications for the Department of International Relations, London, UK.

Madianou, M. (2019). *The biometric assemblage: surveillance, experimentation, profit and the measuring of refugee bodies*. Sage Journal, Vol. 20, Issue 6.

Okiror, S. (2019). *Key donors freeze Uganda refugee aid after UN mismanagement scandal*. The New Humanitarian. Retrieved from: <http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2019/02/28/donors-freeze-uganda-refugee-aid-after-un-mismanagement-scandal> [Accessed 15th March 2020]

OPM, (n/d). *The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF)*. Retrieved From: <https://opm.go.ug/comprehensive-refugee-response-framework-uganda/> [Accessed 26th March 2020]

Parker, B. (2018) *Audit finds UN refugee agency critically mismanaged donor funds in Uganda*. The New Humanitarian. Retrieved from: <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2018/11/28/audit-finds-un-refugee-agency-critically-mismanaged-donor-funds-uganda> [Accessed 26th May 2020]

Parker, B. (2020). *Exclusive: The cyber attack the UN tried to keep under wraps*. The New Humanitarian. Retrieved from: <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/investigation/2020/01/29/united-nations-cyber-attack> [Accessed 25th May 2020]

REACH, (2020). *Reference Map Uganda*. Retrieved from: [https://www.impact-repository.org/document/reach/4058d38e/REACH\\_UGA\\_Map\\_CountryReference\\_21JAN20\\_20\\_A3.pdf](https://www.impact-repository.org/document/reach/4058d38e/REACH_UGA_Map_CountryReference_21JAN20_20_A3.pdf) [Accessed 10th May 2020]

Reliefweb (2019). *Humanitarian Index to Date*. Retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Humanitarian%20Index%20to%20date.pdf> [Accessed 10th May 2020]

Sandvik, K. (2015). *The humanitarian cyberspace: shrinking space or an expanding frontier?* Third World Quarterly, 2016: 37, Issue 1.

Shoemaker, E. Kristinsdottir, G. S. Ahuja, T. Baslan, D. Pon, B. Currion, P. Gumisizira, P. Dell, N. (2019). *Identity at the Margins: Examining Refugee Experiences with Digital Identity*

*Systems in Lebanon, Jordan, and Uganda*. Conference paper, DOI: 10.1145/3314344.3332486.

Sokhi-Bulley, B. (2014). *Governmentality: Notes on the Thought of Michael Foucault*. Critical Legal Thinking. Retrieved from: <http://criticallegalthinking.com/2014/12/02/governmentality-notes-thought-michel-foucault/> [Accessed 10th May 2020]

Taylor, D. (2011). *Michel Foucault Key Concepts*. Acumen Publishing Limited, Durham, UK. pp. 44 - 49.

The New Humanitarian (2005). Two aid workers killed in the North by suspected LRA rebels. Retrieved from: <http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2005/10/27/two-aid-workers-killed-north-suspected-lra-rebels> [Accessed 10th May 2020]

UNHCR (2003). *Handbook for Registration, Procedures and Standards for Registration, Population Data Management and Documentation*. Retrieved from: <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/3f8e93e9a.pdf> [Accessed: 10th May 2020].

UNHCR (2015). *Policy of the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR*. Retrieved from: <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/55643c1d4.pdf> [Accessed 10th May 2020]

UNHCR (2018). *OPM and UNHCR complete countrywide biometric refugee verification exercise*. Retrieved From: <https://www.unhcr.org/afr/news/press/2018/10/5bd72aad4/opm-and-unhcr-complete-countrywide-biometric-refugee-verification-exercise.html> [Accessed 26th May 2020]

UNHCR (2020). Uganda – Refugee Statistics March 2020. Retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/75456.pdf> [Accessed 10th May 2020]

UNHCR, (n/d), 1. *Biometric Identity Management System*. Retrieved from: <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/basic/550c304c9/biometric-identity-management-system.html> [Accessed 18th March 2020]

UNHCR, (n/d), 2. *From ProGres to PRIMES*. Retrieved from: [https://www.unhcr.org/blogs/wp-content/uploads/sites/48/2018/03/2018-03-16-PRIMES-Flyer.pdf?\\_cf\\_chl\\_jschl\\_tk\\_=5f02b6b967e80293b1a8ebbd19031b28e0b5ddf4-1583213620-0-AauDQbo0EHB0PO-AC2-KBXH7G9KuG9je8cEL6LDxalloTc6rRTruFB86u62iAOU2AZ2MZqyrAajm1eJRGbOlSIv-MJGomg1fNoD2gIlmB13eWRLRzLKIMSOKXOG1TFORw8Vk1DIC2FlmRX2BP-wuMuUdKbdXy8CrRS-1AlvP3bFLrZNEQKg7ZWivC32Ale5X8R11Y1eaeB7UQMYxxp0ZtbwcdMheclr41z9gJFouhIXQYd8tSbi7yDpft-fzCOLzV0kxA9-7rovtu-2Trryhs265o-Kl6vLG-qzkV9GRVCvtRG3HtuP31wrB5bqkOdC8mAKZPtN75ZiKN-S1ty0nAaWqnp3bcSrHbgdbKW3c0ZK\\_Z7K-sNNz0zJMdyz8fHGBA](https://www.unhcr.org/blogs/wp-content/uploads/sites/48/2018/03/2018-03-16-PRIMES-Flyer.pdf?_cf_chl_jschl_tk_=5f02b6b967e80293b1a8ebbd19031b28e0b5ddf4-1583213620-0-AauDQbo0EHB0PO-AC2-KBXH7G9KuG9je8cEL6LDxalloTc6rRTruFB86u62iAOU2AZ2MZqyrAajm1eJRGbOlSIv-MJGomg1fNoD2gIlmB13eWRLRzLKIMSOKXOG1TFORw8Vk1DIC2FlmRX2BP-wuMuUdKbdXy8CrRS-1AlvP3bFLrZNEQKg7ZWivC32Ale5X8R11Y1eaeB7UQMYxxp0ZtbwcdMheclr41z9gJFouhIXQYd8tSbi7yDpft-fzCOLzV0kxA9-7rovtu-2Trryhs265o-Kl6vLG-qzkV9GRVCvtRG3HtuP31wrB5bqkOdC8mAKZPtN75ZiKN-S1ty0nAaWqnp3bcSrHbgdbKW3c0ZK_Z7K-sNNz0zJMdyz8fHGBA) [Accessed 4th December 2019]

UNHCR (n/d) 3. *Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework*, Delivering more comprehensive and predictable responses for refugees. Retrieved from: <https://www.unhcr.org/comprehensive-refugee-response-framework-crrf.html> [Accessed 10th May 2020]

U.S. Department of State (2019). *Uganda Travel Advisory*. Retrieved from: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/uganda-travel-advisory.html> [Accessed 10th May 2020]

World Bank (2018). *Identification For Development (ID4D) Diagnostic: Uganda*. International Bank for Reconstitution and Development/The World Bank: Washington D.C. Retrieved from: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/921761542144309171/pdf/132011-REVISED-PUBLIC-ID4D-Uganda-Diagnostic-12282018.pdf> [Accessed 26th May 2020]

## 7.0 Annex 1:

### Diary 13th to 20th December 2019 in Kyaka II

Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>:

- Travel day

Saturday the 14<sup>th</sup>:

- Worked on the report

Sunday the 15<sup>th</sup>:

- Worked on the report

Monday the 16<sup>th</sup>:

- Spoke with Aswani (Area Manager) during the journey to Kyaka II:
  - o Kyaka II stretches over 81 square km and currently hosts around 110.000 refugees, mainly from Democratic Republic of Congo.
- Arrive to Kyaka II at 8:30.
- Security check approaching the office with body temperature detection because of Ebola outbreak.
- Spoke with Marie (Project Coordinator) once at the office (casual chat):
  - o People with protection concerns do not come straight to the office to explain their cases, there are several centers in the settlement where people can go and receive assistance. There are SGBV centers run by SGBV activists, there are Community Based protection centers run by social workers and Legal Aid centers run by “semi-lawyers”, Child Protection is not anymore among DRC protection responsibilities. Beneficiaries often think that going to the main DRC protection office would get assistance quicker, so DRC organizes “protection days”, Tuesday and Friday, where there is open office and beneficiaries are welcome to come to the office. Beneficiaries with protection concerns can also receive assistance by phone.
- Introduction by Marie about the 4 protection pillars (3 implemented in Kyaka) and general information of DRC duties:
  - o Reception center:

- Is managed by DRC, has a capacity of 1500 units in which new arrivals are supposed to get shelter for 3-4 days before to be reallocated but due to major influx and other issues the center can get to host 3000 units and with stays up to 2 weeks.
  - New arrivals are screened physically to identify health and nutrition problems
  - After 3-4 days they are supposed to be relocated in a plot of land over the settlement and are provided with tools to build a shelter and grow crops plus general assistance support (temporary tent and more)
  - At the reception center social workers are identifying people with specific needs as: unaccompanied children, people with disabilities, elderly people, survivors of violence, etc.
  - Protection houses are made available for people with protection insecurities and in case necessary, these people are provided with a small cash assistance to face their concerns (disable person in order to allow them to buy material to face his/her disability)
- Community based protection:
- Provider of community services for issues affecting the refugee community and the relationship between guest and host population
  - Does promote peaceful coexistence among refugees and natives in regards of problems as competition for resources, clashing lifestyle cause of conflict, etc
  - Peaceful coexistence talks are held in in schools frequented by both nationals and refugees in the hope that children would transmit the message at home
  - There is a feedback system of complain that is supposed to be reviewed weekly but happen monthly because in necessary a multi-agency meeting
  - Community leaders are acting as a bridge between refugees and NGOs, are elected by the community and cover different roles as representative of SGBV, elderly persons or with disabilities, etc in order to bring up issues affecting different component of the community. Kyaka II is supposed to have 386 community leaders elected among the 9 zones in which the settlement is divided but due to disorder during the election, some representatives have not been elected in some zones so Kyaka II currently has 361 community leaders
- SGBV:



- SGBV protection department takes care mainly of prevention and response
- DRC trains SGBV activists (beneficiaries) and provide them with assistance material in order to be able to assist survivors, to direct them towards the right path in order to address their cases and to spread the message against SGBV
- DRC held women talk groups in to make them self-sufficient thus less vulnerable and men groups to sensitized them in regards of SGBV
- Legal Aid:
  - Takes care of issues as legal consulting and identification
  - Theft and SGBV are the main issues of which Legal Aid Protection takes care of
  - DRC doesn't represent refugee cases in court but link them to organizations who do that as: Justice Center Uganda, International Refugee Committee, etc
  - The most problematic kind of cases are disputes between parents and children due issues of reallocation of the child in case of violence or similar scenarios
- Resettlement
  - Resettlement programs are aimed to take Congolese to a third country willing to offer him/her permanent citizenship, USA, Sweden and Australia were the most common but an assessment taking into consideration the chances of integration of the refugee need to be undertake
  - The refugees chosen for resettlement needs to be identify from partners and then is up to UNHCR whether or not is a candidate to be resettle, factors to be taken into considerations are: time spent on the settlement (after 15 years there will be more chances to leave), security concerns on the settlement, survivors of SGBV and torture, etc
- Child Protection (not DRC duty in Kyaka II):
  - Children with specific needs as: unaccompanied, violated, disabilities, etc, are identify at reception centers, a Best Interest Determination assessment (BID) is taken in order to find the best solution for his/her case
  - In case of unaccompanied children DRC looks for someone to foster them and the foster parents receive support for every child, material

support and food, that's because there are not major cases of children without foster parents, because for them is convenient

- A major challenge regards children among 12 to 17 years old due to possible violations perpetrated by foster parents as forced labor, abuse, forced marriage, etc
- In case a child misbehaves and has been kicked out from the foster parent the path to follow is to find another one, sometimes in another settlement and in case the misbehavior is criminal related, the children might be taken in a rehabilitation center

Tuesday the 17<sup>th</sup>:

- Reception Center visit
  - Procedure for new arrivals:
    - The convoy gets to the lot in front of the reception center, refugees and asylum seekers move out of the bus, people with handicaps get first aid as wheelchairs to then proceed towards the first sanitation procedure.
    - Beneficiaries received first sanitation, disinfection of hands and measurement of body temperature to detect any Ebola symptom.
    - Beneficiaries move towards the health center for health and nutrition check-up. Those who have been detected any health problem move towards a special accommodation where they can be treated, everybody else towards the block aimed for biometric registration.
    - The biometric registration takes place ONLY if beneficiaries haven't been registered at the transit point at the border.
    - After biometric registration people with specific needs and protection concerns go to a special block where the protection assessment is being done and the case management starts.
    - Subsequently the refugees are being directed towards their accommodation where they are supposed to spend 3-4 days while waiting for the reallocation (it might take up to 2 weeks). Asylum Seekers are directed to another stage just for them where they are supposed to wait (up to 6 months) for the OPM's refugee determination committee to determine a refugee status or not.
    - Delays to move out of the reception center (for refugees) is due to lack of land and items that they are supposed to receive, once there's land and items they are taken to the plots of land where they will stay.

- Reallocation:
  - Procedure for refugee reallocation:
    - Once comes for beneficiaries the time to set on the land a truck takes them to the elected land for them.
    - On the spot they receive various items to build themselves a house and to work the land. They receive a plot of land 15m X 15m plot of land (back in the days was 100m X 100m), 1x blanket, 1x stove to cook, etc. plus the necessary wood to build a temporary shelter that later on, with mud will be improved in a house.
- Mukondo Protection House visit
  - Protection house able to host two households for people that suffered violence within the camp. In the Mukondo case there where two household composed by one SGBV survivors.

Wednesday the 17<sup>th</sup>:

- Reallocation of 1002 beneficiaries:
  - Once disembarked from the truck they give the document to the community based social workers, one document for every household with all the household members on it. The social workers that already had a list with all households take note of who handed-in the document.
  - After that they queue to obtain the wooden poles to build the shelter.
  - Once they receive the poles, the social workers check on the list one last time that everybody handed-in the document receive the poles and that everyone that received the poles are in the list.

## 8.0 Annex 2

Diary 27<sup>th</sup> January to 07<sup>th</sup> February 2020 in Arua

Monday the 27<sup>th</sup>

- Travel day:
  - Departure at 8:00 from Kampala, arrival at 20:00 to Rhino Camp
- Casual chat with Rehema:
  - A major challenge she was speaking with an OPM protection officer (Innocent) was about how to provide child protection services to unregistered children (unregistered in which sense? Aren't they registered as refugees under UNHCR?).
  - A second challenge is of course understaffing and the lack of fuel due to UNHCR that blocked the cards.

Tuesday the 28<sup>th</sup>

- "Monday meeting" postponed to Tuesday due to national holiday.
  - Inputs received during the meeting:
    - CP: food distribution challenged due to understaff
    - Reception center with 1700-2000 beneficiaries (normal capacity 600), why is the number so high? Why is the relocation taking so long? Challenges? Key issues? Ask to officers
    - Basil, protection team leader: interview him about undisciplined stuff (fake sicknesses during weekends days)
    - John Bosco, CP officer: interview him about CP CM
    - Davis, SGBV officer: interview her about SGBV CM
    - Denis, protection coordinator: Interview him about overall key issues
- OCEA reception center:
  - Office for registration of new arrivals:
    - It's the first step for new arrivals (NAs), OPM does the nationality screening and DRC collect the needs of persons with specific needs (PSNs) in order to open the case file. The framework that DRC is using in order to classify PSNs is called "Guidance on the use of standardized specific needs code" (I have it on my notebook)
  - Case Management meeting with UNHCR and OPM:

- The purpose of the meeting was to discuss and find a solution to 12 challenging protection cases (12 households, 26 people) that were “stuck” at the reception center even if they aren’t supposed to be there.
- The gap is that protection cases aren’t supposed to stay in the reception center which is a place for new arrivals and not to stay up until 12 months.
- The solution is to solve the case and reallocate them in the settlement or reference them to other settlement.
- UNHCR and DRC proceeded to the description of each case in order to have a brainstorm and formulate action points.
- Action points for DRC:
  - There’s the need to provide services to all beneficiaries at the reception center, not only to NAs, due to these long-lasting situations that can’t stay so long without soap in the specific case spoke at the Case Management Meeting.
  - Furthermore, after discussion, seems clear that accepting beneficiaries referenced from other settlements is not efficient in the way is happening now, without notice and reallocation letter, it gets the work disorganized for the staff that is forced to operate without the profile document of the certain reallocated beneficiary.

Wednesday the 29<sup>th</sup>

○ Protection working group:

- OPM mentioned water and bushfires as challenges due to direct and indirect consequence of dry season
- OPM also mentioned unregistered children as a challenge and as DRC’s responsibility
- Currently there are more than 1877 individuals at the reception center
- Basil presentation of DRC protection services, challenges and gaps: (ask him slides)
  - Legal Aid challenges: negative attitude
  - Child Protection challenges: overwhelming presence of unaccompanied children at the food distribution point / loss of food
  - Community Based Protection: help desk not yet functioning, cases of reallocation without the necessary tools
- Shelter provision gap: UNHCR doesn’t have a shelter implementing partner for 2020, refugees are forced to help themselves and it might get critical when it will come the time of PSNs as children.
- Legal gap: legal representation of refugees in court is a challenge (ask protection legal officer why).

- Awareness gap: Basil raised a point about how is necessary to raise awareness about problems in the community and legal framework among refugees as soon as they get to the reception center and a second time after reallocation.

Thursday the 30<sup>th</sup>

- OCEA reception center:
  - Morning spent supporting the protection case workers with Best Interest Assessments (BIAs) for unaccompanied children.
  - Afternoon spent in supporting the Legal Aid officer implementing the action points agreed on Tuesday for the problematic cases stuck at the reception center because of problematic reallocation needs.

Friday the 31<sup>st</sup>

- Formulation of the weekly report for Mentor and Line Manager in Kampala.
- Finalization of the tool for the upcoming data collection and schedule of interviews.
- Field mission to find a foster family for Naomi, 17 years old unaccompanied Congolese girl that after reallocation, reallocated herself back at the reception center because fearing abuses.

Monday the 3<sup>rd</sup>

- Monday meeting:
  - At the reception center there is just 1 DRC staff, the other staff are meant to work on OCEA zone but they do not manage the zone but rather stays at the reception center leaving uncover the OCEA zone
  - Basil raised a point about the need to raise awareness among newcomers about where to seek protection for needs concerning each DRC's protection pillar and especially about the Ugandan legal system which is in most cases different from the legal context they come from (tribal context, pastoral, lack of state governance etc.)
  - Basil raised the point about no sense sick leaves and late comers at the office or meetings
- Reception Center Meeting (DRC and UNHCR):
  - Raising issues detected by members of the meeting:

- Low awareness among beneficiaries about where to go in case of protection need
  - Hygiene problem: Latrine full so defecation is taking place all along the fence and the shelters
  - Water/fuel problem: there is few water and no fuel to pump the water
  - Problem is managing the queue in line for nationality screening
  - Problem in the PSNs identification that takes place apart from the registration procedure --> now should take place after nationality screening and as a part of profiling
  - UNHCR recognize that DRC is understaffed in order to provide personnel to all these issues
  - DRC plan to set a permanent staff at the reception center to face the above-mentioned issues but other zones already suffering lack of personnel will pay the bill
- DRC data collection interview with SGBV assistant

Tuesday the 4<sup>th</sup>

- Reception Center
  - DRC data collection interview with Legal Aid Officer
  - Case Management meeting with UNHCR and OPM at the reception center aimed to give updates about the follow ups set on Tuesday the 28<sup>th</sup>, set further action points and time deadlines for the closure of the 12 problematic cases.
  - Academic data collection for master's thesis with the senior registration assistant Abraham
- Back at YORO base camp
  - DRC data collection interview with Protection Team Leader

Wednesday the 5<sup>th</sup>

- Conduction of a first analysis of the data collected to identify first trends in order to modify the data collection tool accordingly for the last round of interviews

Thursday the 6<sup>th</sup>

- DRC data collection interview with Child Protection Officer
- Reallocation of 44 households in Omugo 6 and distribution of NFIs